



GREEN BELT IS UNDER THREAT

Report by Jamie Brassington

A COUNCILLOR has warned 'there is a genuine risk' Halesowen green belt land could be built on to meet a shortage of new homes.

A total of 22,000 homes are needed to meet the growing needs of the population in the Black Country by 2036.

Belle Vale councillor Simon Phipps believes Halesowen's countryside could be used to accommodate a large proportion of these homes.

The Save Halesowen Countryside Campaign has been set up to fight the pressure on the green belt. Campaigners are worried that as many as 5,500 new homes need to be found across Dudley borough, many in Halesowen.

The shortfall was identified in the Black Country Core Strategy report, a document by Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton councils.

Councillor Phipps said: "There is certainly a risk. I have spoken with 12 councillors who represent Halesowen wards and we have all put up opposition to any plans on the green belt in Halesowen."

Develop

"All Halesowen councillors, from three different political parties, are all very clear in our opposition to any plans to develop areas of Halesowen's greenbelt."

He said that according to the report, Dudley borough is actually exceeding housing needs aimed at 2036, meaning there are no 'exceptional circumstances' needed to build on green land, as laid out in national guidelines.

Mick Freer, campaign group leader, said land at risk could include sites in Lapal, Coombes Wood, Lutley and Hayley Green. He added: "All of these are along the southern fringes of Halesowen, stretching from junction 3 (M5) to approaching Hagley, which is beautiful countryside."

Dudley Council leader Patrick Harley said building on green belt was 'very much a last resort' but 'some tough decisions will have to be made.'

He said no 'firm decisions' have been made and it was 'too early to talk about specific locations'. Councillor Harley added: "Making the most of brownfield land is a high priority for us."

DOLLY'S GOT THEM WORKING 9 TO 5 ON MUSICAL



Louise Hicklin, of Halesowen, Salli Gage, of Kingswinford, and Michelle Cassells, of Stourbridge, in 9 to 5 The Musical at Stourbridge Town Hall

PERFORMERS are set to bring a Dolly Parton hit to life on the stage.

Members of Cradley Heath Amateur Operatic Society - known as CHAOS - are putting the finishing touches to their production of 9 to 5 The Musical, which runs from November 14 to 18 at Stourbridge Town Hall.

Michelle Cassells, one of the actors, said: "It's all starting to come together now. It's very funny, fast-moving. It's really good fun."

The show, featuring music and lyrics by the country/pop music sensation, is based on the 1980 movie of the same name, about three office workers who turn the tables on their sexist boss.

Cameo

And Dolly herself will be putting in a cameo appearance via a projection of the Grammy Award winner, who will introduce the char-

acters and lead the audience in a sing-along of the blockbuster title tune.

Tickets, which start from £14, can be purchased by calling the box office on 0121 585 7380.

CHAOS, which is longest established amateur operatics society in the Black Country, moved to its new base in Stourbridge earlier this year after more than 50 years at Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

COURT

Life sentence for hit-and-run killer

THE driver who mowed down Benjamin Morse in a late-night hit-and-run was this week starting a life sentence for murder.

Nidal Alboraike drove his Vauxhall Corsa at a group including Mr Morse. After first missing, he turned his car around and accelerated again, striking the 36-year-old victim from behind and catapulting him onto his windshield, causing a fatal brain injury. The 21-year-old motorist was given a minimum term of 15 years.

● Family speak out - Page 3

DEATH

Bridge fall victim was a Dudley father

A MAN who died after falling from a footbridge over Wolverhampton ring road in the early hours of Sunday was a father-of-one from Dudley, with a second child due in January.

A fundraising page to support the family of Chris Brookes has already raised £1,000. The 22-year-old former Coseley School student worked at Elta Fans in Kingswinford.

COUNCIL

Car park is leased to banqueting suite

A COUNCIL car park is being leased to a firm to help customers in Old Hill.

Haden Road car park is being let by Sandwell Council to The Regis conferencing and banqueting suite.

Councillor Paul Moore, cabinet member for regeneration and economic investment, said: "This is a very good arrangement because the car park was under-used and the money raised by motorists did not cover the council's maintenance costs."

Tony Billingham, who owns The Regis, said: "It benefits us and the council."

INSIDE

NOW DOREEN'S IN THE FRAME



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Still life – bostin' idea to paint Doreen



Doreen – the moaner iz'er

QUEEN of the Black Country Doreen Tipton is hoping to be immortalised in art – and is looking for budding portrait artists to take on the challenge.

The self-styled Lazy Cow has even arranged a sitting – though it will probably be more of a 'lying' – for those who would like to draw her.

The shortlisted entries, to be decided by a panel of judges, will be featured in the Chronicle's sister paper, the Express & Star and go on display at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

And the winning entry, which will be

unveiled in a Doreen video, will later be auctioned off by Antiques Roadshow expert Will Farmer.

Professionals, students and amateur artists can enter. Age is no barrier as the competition even has a children's section for under-15s. The winning entry in this category will also be auctioned off by Mr Farmer if the young painter agrees. "We are on the lookout for an iconic work of art that captures your unique interpretation of the subject," says the rallying call for artists. The judging panel will include Mr Farmer,

who will auction off the winner at his auction rooms in Stourbridge, Tess Radcliffe, curatorial and learning manager at the art gallery, Doreen and writer David Tristram. Doreen has already been painted by Derek Powell-Jones of Rugeley. It is now hanging up on the wall in The Rugeley Rose Theatre.

The still-life sitting at the art gallery is planned for November 25. Spaces are limited to around 15 people but a second sitting may be organised if there is enough interest. To register and get more details email lazycow@doreen.tv

On course for success at college open days

PROSPECTIVE students will be able to check out courses at Halesowen College during open days tomorrow (Friday) and Saturday.

The events are taking place at the Whittingham Road campus between 4pm and 8pm on Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturday.

The college's range of courses will be on show for students considering enrolling.

Bosses have spent £20 million upgrading facilities in recent years including a £3m Performing Arts Centre. Coombs Wood campus has been transformed into an Advanced Science and Technology Centre.

Meanwhile, five students studying Travel and Tourism have been nominated representatives for the department and college.

Safran Ahmed, Jordan Varley, Trinie Nicholls, Chelsea McDermott and Maryam Begum were selected for their positive attitude, commitment and attendance in their first year.

They will be taking part in a range of college activities including open days, taster days and attending focus group meetings. They will also act as mentors to new and returning students.

For more information www.halesowen.ac.uk website.

Ghostly goings-on captured by TV crew

AN HISTORIC Black Country house notorious for paranormal activity has been investigated by TV show Most Haunted as part of a new episode.

Haden Old Hall in Cradley Heath, which dates back to the late 1600s, played host to the popular ghost hunting team, including former Blue Peter host Yvette Fielding.

The episodes aired on Sunday and Monday nights but are available on playback. Council chiefs said Most Haunted's visit provided gave a great opportunity to showcase the landmark building, originally built in the late 1600s as the home of a wealthy farmer.

Jane Hanney, museum services manager, said: "There are lots of ghost stories and strange goings on associated with Haden Old Hall, the most famous of which is the story of a young girl who falls in love with a monk from Halesowen Abbey.

Punishment

"His superiors found out and he is said to have been bricked up with nothing but a small amount of food and one candle as punishment."

The ghost-busting crew visited the site earlier this year. They were filmed investigating the house for paranormal activity in the dark, while the film crews rolled the night vision cameras.

Their findings were shown in a two-part episode, which was shown on Really TV on Sunday and Monday night.

Yvette highlighted how the history of the site goes back to the medieval era and said there could be 'lost souls' left behind. She was struck on the leg by an object during the filming. At one point the crew thought they heard a growl.

Haden Old Hall is now in the hands of Sandwell Museum Service, run by Sandwell Council, and is part of the Haden Hill House Museum.

The episodes are available on uktvplay. uktv.co.uk/channel/really/

MP officially unveils new hospice



MP James Morris opens Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice at Rowley Regis Hospital with Richard Samuda and staff

A NEW hospice has been unveiled officially at a Black Country hospital. The Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice at Rowley Regis Hospital started operating in April.

At a ceremony, Rowley Regis and Halesowen MP James Morris unveiled a plaque to mark its opening. Mr Morris also met patients and staff. The hospice provides care to people suffering life-limiting illnesses including cancer. It is currently open Monday to Wednesday.

Guests at the event included Richard Samuda, chairman of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs the hospice.

The trust was subject of a critical inspection report by the Care Quality Commission this week. The report was published, with the trust rated as requiring improvement.

Mr Samuda said: "We are very proud of our Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice service and the team at Rowley Regis Hospital – it reflects a long term contract relationship

with the Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group.

Mr Morris said: "It is really good to see additional services coming into this small intimate hospital. The patients seem in really good spirits and you can tell they feel relaxed."

Patient Anne Bancroft, 61, who has a heart condition, said: "Before coming here, I used to feel lonely, but not anymore. The staff are lovely."

Ring of concrete protects market

HUGE concrete security barriers have been put in place to protect visitors to Birmingham's famous German Christmas markets from terror attacks.

Birmingham City Council has installed the large concrete bollards throughout the city centre to keep visitors safe as they enjoy the huge festive event, which returns to the city on November 16.

It comes as security measures are increased during the festive period to help prevent similar attacks to the one in Berlin, that left 12 people dead, last year. Vehicles have also been used in terror attacks in London, Barcelona, Nice and, this week, in New York.

The Local Government Association has warned councils to be vigilant and advise installing barriers.

Viscount Cobham's hall talk for hospice

MORE than £3,000 has been raised by Viscount Cobham of Hagley Hall for Mary Stevens Hospice. It came from a dinner at The Granary Hotel and Restaurant entitled An Evening with Lord Cobham, where he spoke about the history of the hall and plans for its future.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Woman seized by knifeman at 3am

A WOMAN was grabbed and threatened with a knife in a shocking late night attack near Birmingham New Street Station.

Police have launched an investigation after the woman was approached at around 3am on Monday.

The woman was walking on Hill Street back to a hotel when she was grabbed and threatened.

But she managed to get away from her assailant and escaped without injury.

Any with information about the incident is urged to call West Midlands Police on the 101 number and quote log reference number 500 30/10.

Bid to bring back old rail route

GOVERNMENT Transport Secretary Chris Grayling is facing calls to reopen a long-disused stretch of railway that passes through the heart of the Black Country.

Campaigners have urged Secretary of State for Transport Mr Grayling to bring back into use a section of the Worcester to Derby Main Line between Stourbridge and Burton in Staffordshire.

The stretch, which passes through Brierley Hill and Dudley, closed in the 1960s as part of the infamous 'Beeching' cuts.

Bond ambition for movie star Julie

JULIE Walters has revealed she would love to play a Bond villain.

The Smethwick-born star joked she would be up for playing the role of a 'baddie woman', similar to Rosa Klebb from From Russia With Love.

The 67-year-old actor recently worked with James Bond producer Barbara Broccoli on Film Stars Don't Die In Liverpool. She said: "They should have a baddie woman. I'd love that. What accent would I use? Depends on the baddie. Maybe she should be from North Korea. Anyhow, I haven't heard back."

Only Fools star Boycie joining Nick for talk

TWO TV legends will share their experiences of nearly 100 years in show business.

John Challis aka Boycie from Only Fools and Horses and Nick Owen from Breakfast TV will appear live on stage talking candidly about their lives and extensive experience in television.

The show will take place on November 14 at Brierley Hill Civic Hall. Tickets are priced at £17.50, doors open 7.15pm.

Revamp as pub aims to be famous for dinners

A PUB in Halesowen will undergo a £98,000 revamp, creating seven new jobs.

The work will take place at The Cobham Arms in Howley Grange Road lasting eight weeks, with its grand re-opening set for December 8.

Both bars will be refurbished at the Marston's-owned pub.

Scott McGeough, who runs the pub alongside his partner Hayley Bishop, said: "It has been fantastic to take on this lovely community pub - we've known it all our lives - and even better to oversee this fantastic new facelift.

"We want to keep it as a much-loved community pub but have plans to build the food side of the business by becoming famous for our Sunday roasts, as well as organising some great entertainment nights too."

The rear bar is being converted into a family-friendly 80-seater restaurant and the front bar will be catering more for drinkers and community events.

The kitchen will be upgraded to offer a classic pub menu.

Marston's area manager Tom Maddison added: "This is one of the biggest investments we have made this year and it will make a vast improvement to the Cobham. We wish Scott and Hayley all the best!"

The couple have 12 years experience in the pub trade.

Travellers' camp location sought

AN emergency holding camp for evicted travellers could be built in Coseley.

Dudley Council bosses are thrashing out plans for a transit site in the borough and Coseley is believed to be on the shortlist.

Councillor Paul Brothwood, UKIP group leader in Dudley said: "It is my understanding a site is being looked at in Coseley. Unfortunately we can't send them to another borough. We have to have one in the borough."

Coseley East Ward councillor Star Anderton said chiefs should prepare for battle over any plans put forward for Coseley.

Council leader Patrick Harley said: "We are currently considering a range of locations and will be reporting findings back to councillors."

Coffee morning

A COFFEE morning is being held aid of the Royal British Legion at H. Cope Limited Funeral Directors in Cradley Heath next Friday, November 10 from 10am. Call (01384) 569388 for details.

Community urged to vote for park gym



Friends of Hawne Park in Halesowen

CAMPAIGNERS are asking the community to 'throw their support' behind a project for an outdoor gym in a park as it bids for funding.

Friends of Hawne Park, in Halesowen, is competing for funding from the Aviva Community Fund 2017 and needs the public's help, as only the top voted projects are in with a chance of winning.

Planning permission has already been granted from Dudley Council and the group needs £10,000 of financial support to make the free gym a reality.

Belle Vale councillor Simon Phipps said: "Outdoor gym equipment such as this has proven very successful in other parks nearby and I hope that the community will throw their support behind this project too.

"I'm really pleased to be able to support the Friends of Hawne Park in their latest bid for funding to introduce more improvements to the park.

The bid comes after a new footpath and welcome sign was installed at the park off Hawne Lane.

The Friends group was set up in 2015.

A consultation took place with the community on what improvements they would like to see at the park. The outdoor gym and children's play area were among the ideas.

Dan Rudge, group vice-chairman, said the gym will be help people to get fit and active. So far it has received more than 500 votes. To vote for the project, visit community-fund.aviva.co.uk/voting and select the project.

Paul Thurlow, group chairman, added: "We'll also be looking to improve other things around the park in the New Year."

No sentence will bring Ben back, say family

"I cannot believe that through some senseless act I have lost my child."

Those are the heart-wrenching words of a Halesowen mother after her son's murderer was sentenced to life behind bars.

Benjamin Morse, of Yewtree Road, described as cheeky and fun-loving, had enjoyed a bank holiday Sunday with his friends drinking in Birmingham and his hometown of Halesowen.

His life was cut short that night when 21-year-old Nidal Alboraiqi drove into him from behind, catapulting him onto the windscreen of the Vauxhall Corsa, following an unexplained exchange.

The 36-year-old avid Arsenal fan suffered a catastrophic brain injury which he could not survive.

Alboraiqi, of Foxhunt Road, Halesowen, was this week starting a minimum of 15 years in jail after being sentenced at Wolverhampton Crown Court following a two-week trial.

Mr Morse's mother, Gay Jones, 59, said: "As a mother you never expect to say goodbye to your child, that you would make arrangements for their funeral. This was one of the hardest things I have had to do.

Phone

"Even now I expect Ben to walk in through the front door. I expect my phone to ring and Ben to be on the other end for a chat."

Alboraiqi's trial was unable to shed any light on what prompted him to drive at Mr Morse and his friends in Beach Street, Halesowen, in the early hours of May 1. The group of friends had just got out of a taxi.

He was also found guilty of perverting the course of justice after trying to dispose of the car. For this he was handed a two-year jail term to run concurrently with the life sentence.

Mr Morse's sister, Ruth Morse, 32, said they too are serving a 'life sentence', adding: "Life as we knew it changed forever when Ben was killed."

Alboraiqi's 19-year-old brother, Ahmed, was found guilty of seeking to pervert the course of justice by disposing of a mobile phone for his brother. He was sentenced on Monday to 12 months in prison and a further two months for an unrelated matter of possession of cannabis.

Judge John Burridge said killer Nidal Alboraiqi had not shown 'an ounce of common decency'.



Benjamin Morse (inset) and the scene of his murder in Halesowen where a motorist mowed him down



Ben's mother and sister, Gay and Ruth, with his friend Simon Mcevoy at a charity event held in his memory



Callous hit-and-run killer Nidal Alboraiqi has been given a life sentence

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Councillors pledge to fight bid for boundary changes

THREE councillors have launched a campaign to block proposed boundary changes they say would 'rip the heart out' of Dudley.

Under Boundary Commission plans unveiled last month, part of Dudley town centre and neighbourhoods to its east would be placed in a new Sandwell constituency stretching almost 10 miles to Birmingham. Councillors in St Thomas ward – which includes Kates Hill, Buff-

Conveying success to winner Hollie

A WOMAN from Halesowen is celebrating after winning an award for being Best Young Conveyancer of the Year.

Hollie Downs took home the prize in the South of England at the annual Law Firm Services Conference & Awards 2017.

The 29-year-old came first out of five shortlisted and was presented with her trophy at an awards ceremony held at Vox Centre, NEC Birmingham.

Hollie is a trainee solicitor at Davisons Solicitors, Colmore Row, Birmingham.

She went to Windsor High School in Halesowen and King VI College in Stourbridge.

A conveyancer specialises in the legal aspects of buying and selling property.

ery Park, Oakham and Blowers Green – are urging businesses, charities, community groups and residents to oppose the plans.

Councillors Shaukat Ali, Steve Walther and Shanelia Mughal made their views clear in a joint statement.

They said: "We think these proposals are terrible for the community we serve and the businesses in the town centre we represent."

Ripped

"Why should our ward be chucked in with seven Sandwell wards in a constituency stretching miles and miles, to the edge of Birmingham? We represent the heart of Dudley and it should not be ripped out like this. We're asking residents, businesses, charities and community groups to write to the Boundary Commission and urge them to think again."

The landmark St Thomas's Church would be in a different constituency to the ward that carries its name. It has been part of Dudley North since its formation in 1997. The seat is currently held by Labour MP Ian Austin, and will be scrapped if the commission's plans are signed off by MPs following the latest consultation.

The Boundary Commission plans are part of a move to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600.

Future bright for Haden Cross pub



The Haden Cross pub, between Halesowen and Old Hill, which is now due for a refurbishment after being taken over

A PUB which was saved by a community campaign has had its future secured following the arrival of a new management team.

Father and son Stan and Karl Gardner have taken the reins at the Haden Cross, near Haden Hill Park.

The pub became the subject of a high-profile campaign three years ago when owner New River Retail revealed plans to build a supermarket on its car park, which sparked fears about the

impact it would have on the pub. The popular boozery was sold by Marston's and New River has now agreed for the Gardners to run the pub – bringing much-needed security for the venue.

They bring a wealth of experience with them as they also run the Waterfall in Blackheath and the Bell and Bear in Halesowen.

Under their leadership, the pub will serve food and Black Country favourite Batham's ale.

The plan to put a Co-op store on the car park prompted a huge backlash, with the weight of objections eventually resulting in the application being refused.

Tim Haskey, from the Friends of Haden Cross group, which secured Asset of Community Value status for the pub, said: "We're chuffed. Three years on from the campaign to stop New River putting a shop on the car park we have a long-term tenant."

Heritage hub scheme for old ironworks

AN HISTORIC former ironworks is set to be brought back into use as a heritage centre and base for health-care training.

An application has been lodged with Dudley Council to transform Riverside House, next to the Stourbridge Canal, into a heritage centre with cafe, restaurant and craft shop selling local produce.

The Riverside Stourbridge Community Interest Company would also work with adults in health and social care to help them develop confidence and practical skills from the site.

Lloyd Stacey, managing director, said work would get under way in the next six months. More than £80,000 funding is already in place.

He explained: "This is an amazing project that will transform the area. This old ironworks is one of the most important sites in Dudley in terms of historical and national significance."

"We are taking on the old iron master's house and his estate along with ancillary workshops, including the remnants of the stables and outbuildings. All being well we will start building work within the next six months."

Forum

The plans also feature a rest space, canteen area, kitchen and woodland.

Mr Stacey continued: "The building will have round porthole-style windows to match the nearby Lion Health Medical Centre and an over-hanging green roof to provide extra shelter. So far we have had £82,000 funding from different regional and national funders and also the council community forum."

"The other side of this is working with adults in health and social care to help them develop skills. This is a place where heritage, community and culture can be seriously integrated with provisions for this group."

Councillor Rachel Harris said: "We welcome the exciting proposals."

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Expansion of estate means boost to jobs

SENIOR councillors have welcomed the prospect of hundreds of new jobs at a Brierley Hill industrial estate.

The jobs are to be created after Dudley Council approved the estate's expansion, which business leaders estimate will add millions of pounds to the local economy.

A Local Development Order (LDO) has been agreed for Blackbrook Valley Area in Brierley Hill, which will make it easier for new businesses to move in.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member planning and economic development, said this will create 250 jobs in 106 hectares of land. Welcoming the plans, he said: "I want to get local wages up."

Dudley Council deputy leader David Vickers said: "I welcome these plans that will create new jobs in Dudley. This is something that is much needed."

High quality manufacturing and office jobs will be created on the estate. The LDO will make it easier for businesses to set up shop.

Backing

Blackbrook falls in a 'regeneration corridor' earmarked between Dudley and Brierley Hill, which ties to the planned Midland Metro line when the network links up with Dudley and Brierley Hill.

It forms part of the DY5 Enterprise Zone which was set up in Brierley Hill in January after backing from the Government. The zone will create 7,000 jobs and could generate £589 million annually for the area's economy.

It is situated in around 700,000sq m of land at Blackbrook Valley, between Netherton and Russells Hall.

A report said: "The purpose of this Local Development Order is to help deliver area based economic growth and regeneration in close proximity to the DY5 Enterprise Zone."

Care at hospitals is still falling short, say inspectors

Shop steward Red Robbo dies, aged 90

TRIBUTES have been paid to former British Leyland worker and trade unionist Derek Robinson, who has died, aged 90.

Mr Robinson – who was dubbed Red Robbo – was one of the most famous names of the trade union movement in the 1970s.

As shop steward at the British Leyland plant in Longbridge, he was involved in a series of strikes and walkouts over alleged mismanagement. He is said to have caused more than 500 walkouts between 1978 and 1979, costing an estimated £200 million in lost production during the Winter of Discontent.

Described by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as 'a notorious agitator', Mr Robinson was a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), which is now part of the Unite union.

He was sacked by Leyland in 1979, having stood as a Communist candidate in four consecutive general elections in Birmingham Northfield between 1966 and 1974.

He worked as a tutor in trade union studies during the 1980s and 1990s, and was chairman of the Communist Party of Britain for a period in the 1990s.

Walsall South Labour MP Valerie Vaz, said: "His contribution to the trade union movement and help and support for working people in the West Midlands will never be forgotten."



Red Robbo speaks to striking workers at Longbridge in the 1970s

CARE at Rowley Regis Hospital has been labelled 'inadequate' by the health watchdog. The quality and levels of staff on wards at Sandwell and City Hospitals has also been identified as a concern.

Inspectors from the Care Quality Commission have now ordered Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust to make improvements. The Trust has been rated as 'requires improvement' overall – meaning it keeps the same tag from its previous inspection two years ago.

Inspectors singled out community inpatient services at Rowley Regis Hospital in Moor Lane as "inadequate because of lack of mental health capacity assessments, poor care planning and inconsistent assessment of risk."

The Trust was rated 'requires improvement' for being safe and responsive, but was 'outstanding' for being caring and 'good' for being well-led. End of life care was also said to be 'outstanding'.

Competent

The results of the inspection take in A&E, medical and surgical services, end of life care, outpatient services and the Birmingham Midland Eye Centre.

It comes at a crucial time for the trust as it prepares for the opening of the new £350 million Midland Metropolitan Hospital in spring 2019.

The CQC's chief inspector of hospitals, Professor Ted Baker, said: "Although some improvements had been noted since our previous from October 2014, the trust had not made all the necessary changes."

Toby Lewis, Trust chief executive, said: "We are all pleased that they recognised real improvement since the Trust was inspected in 2014. I am delighted with the rating for our innovative partnership for end of life care."

Rail project wall costing £500k more

A MAJOR project bringing together the Midland Metro extension and light rail centre development in a Black Country town will cost half-a-million pounds more than expected.

A 250-metre concrete retaining wall is due to be built next to Tipton Road in Dudley but will now cost £4.33m rather than the initial £3.8m estimate following a 'review' of construction costs. Dudley Council will be applying for funding to pay for the scheme.

Bosses say work on the wall must start as soon as possible to avoid the project being delayed.

The barrier is needed to divide the Midland Metro and light rail centre, two huge developments planned for Dudley in the next decade.

Design fees for the wall have also increased from £195,000 to £294,000 – though it is expected this cost will also be met by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Brexit? He must think that we are all thick

DO you ever think that some of our public figures are actually Jeremy Beadle style wind-up merchants, liable at any minute to whip off their comedy wig and produce a hidden microphone?

I only ask following the breathtakingly arrogant and out-of-touch statement from John Bercow, Speaker of the House of Commons, during a visit to Wolverhampton University.

Mr Speaker said he was "not a fan" of giving the public a vote on major issues such as Brexit, saying "nuanced and complicated" issues were best left to MPs. In other words, I think he's saying we're a bit thick. Best not to trouble the great unwashed with difficult stuff, just leave it to the intellectual titans at Westminster.

Let us not forget that three of the most prominent parliamentarians wheeled out by the Remain campaign last year were Alan Johnson, Lord Prescott and Sir John Major. Who, before entering Parliament had respectively worked as a postman, a ship's steward and a navy.

Nothing wrong with that, of course. Indeed, it is surely a good thing to have politicians who come from a similar background to the rest of us.

But they're not exactly rocket scientists, are they? If they can understand Brexit, then surely we can too.

□□□

GREAT to hear Wolverhampton Council has spent £19,000 on a new "corporate image" for the city. The number of times I have driven through some of the riper parts of Horseley Fields and thought to myself "what this city really needs is a new logo."

It seems some of this money was spent on tickets for Wolves games and taxi rides, to give the consultants "a feel for the city". Can't say fairer than that, although they would have probably got more of a feel for the city in the subway next to the Mercedes garage.

The council says the consultants "undertook very thorough research over a number of months".

Anyhow, the good news is that the consultants have come up with a new logo, which is essentially a stylised letter "W" and the words "City of Wolverhampton" underneath, and hats off to them. You can't come up with ideas like that on the cheap.

Sadly, though, it has come too late to go on the new "Welcome to Wolverhampton" signs installed earlier this year at a cost of £23,000. Which is rather a shame, as they would have looked really good next to the boarded-up pub in Birmingham Road.

We bought diesels believing they were better for planet



Actress Sian Webber – no such historical character as Lady Dorothy



Dodgy TV subtitles – one reader recalls 'Cold Daddy' for Colonel Gaddafi



Prime Minister Theresa May faces a dilemma over the Chancellor

T for Toxic maybe, but they will stay

I WONDER how many of us driving older diesel cars which have now been branded T for Toxic in London, will do exactly the opposite of what the clean-air lobby expects. At a stroke, the market value of our old bangers has been reduced, so we are hardly likely to rush to the showroom and trade them for a shiny new model at a whopping loss. We are far more likely to keep on running them for as long as possible. We bought our diesels in the belief that they were not only economical but also better for the planet. The science changes, the politicians do their virtue-signalling and we take the hit.

A SURVEY for Woman's Hour reveals that the London borough of Islington is the worst place in Britain for women to live. But look at the wider results of this survey on favoured or despised places and one fact becomes blindingly obvious. A lot of women hate cities.

I HEARD a weather forecaster this week refer to sunny spells on "the extreme south coast." Not to be confused with the moderate, mild, rational or marginal south coast.

BRIGHTHOUSE, the so-called rent-to-own retailer, has been ordered to pay nearly £15 million to compensate about 250,000 customers and has been denounced by the Financial Conduct Authority for not being a "responsible lender." A reader reports getting an email, allegedly from BrightHouse, offering a refund and requesting his bank details. It's a scam. Bin it.

RESEARCHERS at Glasgow University reported a couple of years ago that, while English regional accents are vanishing, Scottish accents are thriving. If you doubt that, listen to Jamie Haron, the 27-year-old from Stirling jailed in Dubai

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



for allegedly touching a man's hip, talking to reporters when he arrived at Glasgow Airport. It may have made perfect sense to everyone in Stirling but we Sassenachs were struggling.

THIS sort of interview must pose a dilemma for the TV companies. Imagine the diplomatic incident if the BBC, Sky or ITV started using subtitles for interviews in Scotland.

THE most distressing scene in Gunpowder (BBC1) was the execution of Lady Dorothy Dildale which required actress Sian Webber to strip naked before being crushed under weights. You can argue that such grisly and obscene detail is vital to tell the true story. Yet the truth is there was no such historical character as Lady Dorothy. She was created for the series, presumably to crank up the gore level.

I REFERRED a few days ago to the Co-op bank ending its policy of sending addressed envelopes with credit-card statements and trying to pretend that we customers asked for it "in our quest towards a paperless future." Making the public think they support some new policy is commonplace. Take the revelation that drivers may soon be prosecuted for any litter dropped from their car, even if somebody else dropped it. Part of Whitehall's justification for this is that a survey revealed 81 per cent of us are angry about the amount of litter on our roads. Well, of course we are. But it's a quantum leap from that to accepting the principle that Citizen A can

be punished for the sins of Citizen B. Once that notion gets into English law, where will it end?

THANKS for your memories of dodgy subtitles on television news reports. The technology does not seem to get better. One reader recalls 'Cold Daddy' for Colonel Gaddafi, and 'I ritz eye', the words allegedly uttered by a resigning politician. The recent Storm Ophelia was 'feely'.

A READER tells me she plucked up her courage, strode into a local shop and complained about the "tasteless and grotesque" Halloween decorations which featured blood-stained handprints on the shop window with the warning: "No-One Leaves." Good for her. The media moguls may own the airwaves but the streets are still ours. Defend them.

IS 'spreadsheet Phil' Hammond the most bumbling, blundering Chancellor of the Exchequer in living memory, whose political antennae, if indeed he ever had any, have simply withered out of existence?

Or is he, in fact, much smarter than most people have given him credit for, and just pretending to be gormless? My feeling is that Hammond is indeed a lot smarter, acute and well-meaning than many people have suggested.

Sometimes, you cannot help but get the impression that Hammond, who has been accused of near-sabotage over Brexit, is taunting the Prime Minister to take drastic action over his post. A rampant Hammond on the Tory backbenches could be real trouble for Theresa May.

So the Prime Minister faces a dilemma. Dumping your Chancellor is no minor matter, but how long can she tolerate this continued behaviour from a Chancellor who does not bother even to be subtle in his machinations?

TALKING POINT



Dog tired of dirty mutts in 'my space'

THE confession I am about to make is likely to shock, perhaps repulse and may lead to me becoming a social pariah.

But I refuse to maintain this veil of shame any longer. My name is Diane Davies and I don't like dogs!

This revelation will have consequences. Whenever I let any hint of my dislike show I am usually subjected to interrogation and a verbal bashing.

To the extent that I felt forced to hide this guilty secret for fear it could damage my career. With one previous boss I even pretended to like the dirty, needy creatures because they were a big dog lover.

People are genuinely surprised that I do not like dogs. Not that I wish them any harm of course. I just don't want them jumping up me demanding attention and pulling my clothes.

Is it right that whenever I venture out on a pleasant stroll at one of the many beauty spots on our doorstep that I can expect a mud-soaked mutt to come running up to me? The added sight of one of my children is guaranteed to throw a dog into a frenzy as an apparent play pal is on the scene.

Do the owners apologise profusely for their over-exuberant pet? Sometimes, but mostly it is accompanied by a beaming smile and the reassurance 'don't worry, they won't hurt you.'

What they are really saying is the animal has never actually hurt THEM. The dog has never met me before and hasn't encountered my daughter who is likely to want to hang onto its tail and want a piggyback. Even the most mild-mannered pet might find this annoying.

Friends and family are quite distraught that I do not want to pet their beloved pet. While I am quite distraught that the beloved pet is taking up half the sofa and when I finally get a seat I will be leaving the house wearing a blanket of animal hair.

Cynophobia is the fear of dogs, an actual medical condition which suggests that though we might be known as a nation of dog lovers not everyone is signed up to it. Bit like Brexit.

I don't have a phobia of dogs, I just prefer to stay away from them - if only they would do the same. In my experience dogs can sniff out people who are not dog-lovers and will come boisterously bounding up to us just to make us look bad.

It's not that I hate animals, I have two gorgeous cats. And life would be very dull if we were all the same and please don't judge me because I don't share your love of dogs. I'm a nice person really but please keep your mutts well away from me.

DIANE DAVIES

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EU blocking Brexit progress, so move on

I BELIEVE that the UK should seriously prepare for a Brexit that involves walking away from the EU completely.

This could well mean that neither side gets anything from our decision to leave the EU. I draw this conclusion from considering press reports of the mood of the current negotiations between the UK and EU representatives.

Our negotiators offer ways forward and the EU negotiators reject them. They say we are not offering enough to satisfy the future of EU citizens, how the UK/Eire border will work and how much we are prepared to pay to leave.

What they are really trying to achieve is not a solution to these subjects but to prolong the negotiating exercise.

I think the EU negotiators know only too well that a free trade agreement between the two parties is the sensible way forward and once they start to address the issue they will come under intense pressure from EU industrial interests.

In view of our membership of the EU for the last few decades this is, surely, the correct way to proceed, however, this would go against the main tenet of EU membership which is free trade =

free movement and they know only too well that the UK voted to leave the EU primarily to bring control of immigration back to our shores.

We also have to consider, especially in relation to recent comments from Mr Juncker, that the unelected that control the EU are constantly seeking to establish a single European establishment with common taxes, common laws and an EU army. Negotiating free trade agreements is not their primary concern anymore!

MICHAEL CALLDINE
Kingswinford

It's no spin, my theory on climate

AFTER all of the talk about weather and earthquakes, my mind has been playing with a thought, but because it concerned the revolution of the earth, until this morning I could not think of a suitable way to describe what was in my head. Then bingo!

Take a slice segment through the earth and you get a wheel. At the centre, is the hub and on the outside is the rim. If you upset the balance, you get trouble. So you keep taking away from the centre, and adding the substance removed to the outside, the wheel spins faster, doesn't it? If the outside is not loaded evenly it wobbles, doesn't it?

For many years, man has been taking from the centre of the earth coal, oil, etc and making concrete and tarmac structures. All adding height and weight to the surface of the earth causing it to spin faster. Are my thoughts so far out from what is happening?

PETER COLE
Kingswinford

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

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More begging on streets than ever

IS it just me or does the number of people begging in Dudley town centre increase by the week? Over the past few weeks it's got worse and worse, people openly begging asking for money and cigarettes, sat in disused shop doorways.

Now don't get me wrong, I know full well that people fall on hard times through one reason or another, but you don't want to keep seeing and being subjected to this whilst trying to do a bit of shopping.

Surely there's some organisation or other that can help them to save them having to resort to this way of life just to survive? No wonder there's so many empty shops in the town, potential shop owners must come along and see these unfortunate people begging on the street and in shop doorways and well, let's just say, it don't look too good does it?

LEE THOMAS
Brierley Hill

Let's just cut our EU losses now

MAY I please respond to Alan T Harrison's reply to my recent letter regarding our trade deficit with the EU?

Perhaps I should just refer to him as Harrison as he does not refer to myself, or indeed Roger Watts either, by using anything other than just a surname.

I am not exactly sure just what Harrison means by proportionality, but having weaved his complex web of calculations that supposedly demolish my argument, none of it can refute the established fact that in trade we are in deficit to the EU to the extent of approximately £60 billion per annum, and this fact should give the UK negotiators a strong hand.

With regard to a trade deal, the common sense outcome for all concerned would, of course, be for the UK and the EU to continue to trade within a free trade area, without payment of a fee on either side.

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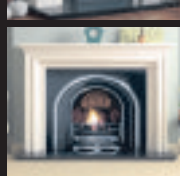
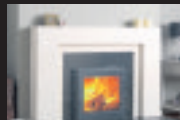
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Hundreds turn out for tragic Megan's funeral

A FUNERAL service has been held for Megan Bills – the 'vibrant' and 'wonderful' 17-year-old whose body was found in a clingfilm-wrapped wardrobe.

More than 200 people turned out at St James Church in Wollaston on Monday to say a final farewell to the hairdresser from Stourbridge.

The ceremony came five months after she was discovered dead at a hotel in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill.

Westlife song 'I'll See You Again' played out as mourners entered the church where Megan's wicker coffin was placed at the front draped in flowers.

Reverend Nick Kaleniuk began by telling how Megan was born in Coventry and was brought up by adoptive parents Dawn and Martin Bills in Stourbridge with her brother James.

She went to St James Primary School in the town. She became a dedicated member of the church choir while going on to pursue a career as a hairdresser.

Adventures

Rev Diana Farmer then read out a tribute from her family, saying: "She played flute beautifully, cooked the best cakes, had an amazing talent in her profession as a hairdresser, was kind and caring to people of all ages and loved animals – especially dolphins."

She described how the teenager would dress up and put on make-up to go out one minute, only to then join in a game of football outside the next. She also loved going on holiday even wearing her bikini under her clothes on the way there just to jump



Megan Bills, was aged 17 when she died



Order of service for Megan's funeral



The hearse arrives at St James Church in Wollaston for the funeral of Megan

in the sea at the earliest opportunity.

"Dawn, Martin and James said what a privilege and honour it was to have been a part of her life, there were lots of adventures along the way," Rev Farmer added.

The service also heard a tribute from Megan's former foster carer

Jenny, who said: "She was loved by everyone who knew her."

Ashley Foster, aged 24, of no fixed address, was arrested and charged in connection with Megan's death. He has admitted one count of preventing a burial but denied a charge of murder. He is due to stand trial in January.

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The Goons, when they reunited, Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan



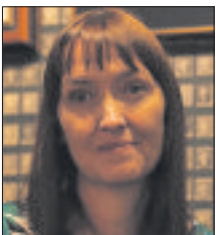
Tony Hancock, in typical pose from his classic TV show



Larry with Diana on their wedding day, plus Tony Hancock and his wife Cicely in 1950



During the filming of Carry On Up the Jungle, with Kenneth Connor, touted as a possible star of Vacant Lot



Rediscovered – Julie Warren Former Goon Michael Bentine

It's no joke! Without West Brom lad Larry comedy would be very different

HE was the boy from the Black Country who helped to transform post-war British comedy.

Writing for entertainment giant Tony Hancock and co-creating The Goon Show, Larry Stephens had a way with words that seemed to resonate with an audience.

But his tragic death at the age of just 35 means his name is not as familiar as the likes of his peers Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe and Peter Sellers. Eager for the writer's contribution to the world of comedy to be fully appreciated, Julie Warren, who is Larry's first cousin, once removed, has written a book about his life.

"He deserves for more people to know what he did because without him British comedy would have been very different," said the 49-year-old. Larry was born in West Bromwich in 1923 and by the age of

MEMORY LANE

By Heather Large

four had moved to Quinton where he attended Quinton Infant and Junior School and then Birmingham Central Grammar School before starting work as an estate agent's clerk.

His first love was music and he was a jazz pianist with Dennis R Hinton and His Band at venues across the Midlands. In 1942, the band enjoyed success in a competition organised by Melody Maker magazine, which took them to the regional heats held at Wolverhampton's Civic Hall.

His musical career was interrupted by the Second World War. He was an officer with the British Commandos and served in Burma and India, when he would spend his spare time writing plays in his role as entertainment officer for his unit. After the war,

he finished his service in 1947 and returned home to Quinton before moving to London.

"He met an agent called Phyllis Rounce, who represented Tony Hancock, and she thought they would get on well. Larry ended up becoming one of the his main writers and also introduced him to his first wife Cicely Romanis," said Julie.

"He was best man at the wedding and a few days later Larry married catwalk model Diana Forster and Tony and Cicely were witnesses at the wedding," she added. It was Hancock who introduced him to Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and Michael Bentine. Apart from The Goon Show, Larry also wrote for TV's top-rated The Army Game and created scripts for Hancock on stage, as well as his ATV series, The Tony Hancock Show. Sadly, Larry died in 1959 from a brain haemorrhage caused by hypertension. "It's very tragic," said Julie. "He had been given a year to live so he at least had some warning," she added.

While growing up, she had been told stories about her script-writing relative by her grandmother. "I couldn't believe how much he had done. I had always wanted to write a book and I knew I wanted to write about Larry," said Julie.

It was while researching, she discovered two long-lost radio scripts in the BBC archives, which had been penned by Larry for Hancock in 1952. They were two episodes for a comedy series, called Vacant Lot, focused on life in the dull faded fictional seaside town of Churdley Bay. Despite actors such as Sellers, Milligan and Carry On's Kenneth Connor being mooted for roles, they were never recorded. Now they will be performed for the first time at the Funny Things festival in Wolverhampton.

The Lost Hancocks: Vacant Lot will be performed at the Light House Media Centre at 2pm and 7pm on Saturday, November 4. Julie is crowdfunding to help publish her book. Visit unbound.com/books/goons



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Chief Constable Dave Thompson addressing MPs

Return of traditional crimes 'piles up pressure on police'

THE West Midlands' police chief has warned that a rise in 'traditional crimes' is piling pressure on the region's force as he took the battle for increased funding to Westminster.

Chief Constable Dave Thompson said spikes in crimes involving guns and knives as well as burglary were 'back as a challenge' having previously declined.

While addressing the cross-party Home Affairs Committee in the

By Peter Madeley

House of Commons on the future of policing, he also called for a national debate on the 'horrifying' scale of people viewing child abuse images online, insisting that prosecuting offenders was 'not going to be an answer on its own'.

Mr Thompson, who is the lead for the National Police Chiefs Council for Finance, said there were 'red lights' over the ability of

West Midlands Police to perform. And he admitted that its effectiveness had been 'curtailed' over the past year due to the continued impact of funding cuts stretching resources.

"I look at neighbourhood officers and they are frustrated that some of the preventative work they want to do is not happening. I look at the kind of reactive investigation loads, and we are finding prioritising that harder," he told the MPs.

Professor Brian Cox¹¹ back for live show

HAVING set two Guinness World Record titles with his previous sell-out live UK and Ireland tour, Professor Brian Cox is set to return to the West Midlands.

Taking audiences to the edge of our current understanding about the origin and evolution of our Solar System and the Universe, Professor Brian Cox Live 2019 offers a fascinating insight into the workings of nature at the most fundamental level.

He will once again be joined by co-host of The Infinite Monkey Cage and award-winning comedian Robin Ince to oversee an audience Q&A.

Cox is Professor of Particle Physics at The University of Manchester, The Royal Society Professor for Public Engagement in Science and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Professor Brian Cox will appear at Arena Birmingham on February 23, 2019.

Assaults on health staff tops 15,000 in five years

By Peter Madeley

MENTAL health staff in the West Midlands have been subjected to violent attacks by patients more than 15,000 times over the last five years, new figures have revealed.

And the number of assaults in the region's mental health units has rocketed by 23 per cent since 2012-13 leading to calls for tougher security measures to protect workers.

Figures obtained via a Freedom of Information request showed that over the period there was a total of 23,363 attacks across the region's four mental health trusts - the Black Country Partnership, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership, South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Trust, and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust - equating to an average of 13 attacks a day.

Of those, 15,631 involved patients attacking staff, and 7,679 were patient-on-patient assaults.

The figures also show that on 54 occasions, staff attacked patients, while there were three incidents where staff attacked other workers.

South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Trust saw the largest number of incidents with 9,728 attacks. Across the region, there were 4,099 attacks reported in 2012-13 and 5,052 in 2016-17 - an increase of 23 per cent.

The data was sourced by the Lib Dems, whose West Midlands spokesman Rob Quarmby said: "We should take a zero tolerance approach against anyone who attacks any of our staff either physically or verbally and we work with local police in the management of aggressive and violent individuals. The safety of staff and patients is the most important thing and we take the issue of hospital security very seriously. Staff should be told to report all violent incidents to the police."

Public service union Unison revealed that in a survey of more than 1,000 mental health staff, 42 per cent of respondents said they had been victims of violence over the last year.

Sara Gorton, head of health at Unison, said staff shortages meant fewer people were around to deal with rising numbers of patients with complex needs. "This is leading to an increase in violence and a working environment that makes it more difficult to retain staff," she said.

The Department of Health said it was 'completely unacceptable' for NHS staff to face violence or aggression at work. A DoH spokesman said £11.6bn had been invested last year and it was creating 21,000 new posts by 2021.

Tourism booming as business hits £850m

TOURISM has helped boost a county's economy by more than £850 million and created 17,000 jobs, figures show.

Tourism has also been rising as visitors continue to flock to Worcestershire and the Wyre Forest district. Councillors are bidding to get an even bigger slice of the tourism pie to help attract more investment.

The most recent statistics show more than 16 million tourist trips are being made to Worcestershire every year. Visitors to the Wyre Forest district, which boasts the Severn Valley Railway and the West Midland Safari Park, also attracted more people.

Councillor Ken Pollock said: "It's fantastic news. We are a world-class county and the more people who enjoy our beautiful countryside and picturesque towns, the better."

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Working through lunch can cost £33K

IN the fast paced modern workplace, it can be hard to get a moment to catch your breath. However, new research shows that Brits all over the UK are sacrificing their lunch break to spend a greater proportion of their working day chained to their workspace.

It is nothing new that the true value of a proper lunch break and the positive impact it can have on workers is lost on some employers. However, it seems that under the pressure of a never-ending workload and in the race to get ahead, more and more Brits are themselves choosing to sacrifice lunch altogether.

Research unveiled today by leading job board total-jobs, who surveyed 7,135 workers across the UK, has highlighted that over half of Brits (56%) do not take their full lunch break.

While the average lunch break designated to workers is 40 minutes, the average time taken each day by the average UK employee is only 27. Over the course of a career, Brits are losing £33,264 in earnings for the work they do during unpaid lunch breaks, amounting to 1.6 times the average UK annual salary.

The research indicates that many workers fail to take proper lunch breaks as a result of their mind-set and the culture that has been created, as opposed to a company policy dictated by senior management.

Though 65% said they were actively encouraged to take a proper lunch break, only 33% of these workers said they did. The remaining 32% found themselves too busy to take a lunch break and often skipped it altogether. However, the research also revealed that 1 in 5 workers were not aware of legislation around lunch breaks. This suggests that many workers don't know their rights around taking a break, and employers have a duty to ensure workers are not only encouraged, but also informed around their lunch break.

Workload and pressures dominate the thoughts of workers across the country, with 68% saying they simply had too much work to do or last minute unexpected tasks dropped on them to justify taking a full lunch break.

Shockingly, over a quarter (27%) skip lunch altogether between two and four times a week. Though employers legally have to designate time for lunch and allocated breaks and many companies are actively encouraging workers to use it, employees still clearly feel they have not earned their break due to their volume of work. This will naturally cause a knock on effect to the rest of their working day, with 37% of women and 26% of men stating they felt stressed when they have had to skip lunch.

There is also a clear difference in industrial perceptions of a lunch break. While over half (59%) of those in the manufacturing industry were likely to use their lunch break in full, only 31% of those in the banking used their allotted time for lunch. Nearly a quarter (24%) of those in the catering industry always worked during their lunch break. Famed for its culture of entertaining and socialising, only 6% of employees in the media industry said that they regularly work through their lunch break.

Smokers have long been criticised for taking breaks during working hours. One in five (21%) smokers stated that they took cigarette breaks daily, with the average smoker nipping outside three times a day to soothe their craving. Nearly a third (32%) of employees said they had an issue with colleagues taking regular cigarette breaks, showing the issue is still a bone of contention even 10 years after the smoking ban came into force.

However, many employees view their smoking breaks as an alternative to the traditional lunch break, and as an opportunity to escape their workplace. The research revealed one in four UK employees don't have a staff room or canteen.

Alcohol is also playing an increasing role in the lunchtime habits of UK workers. The research found that the average UK worker drank six units of alcohol per week during their lunch breaks, which was likely to be drunk in one sitting. Rather than adopting Continental habits, the research suggests that the drinkers in the UK workforce are keen to spend Friday lunchtimes in the pub to make up for the lunch breaks they have missed earlier in the week.

A shocking 68% of all UK workers said that they NEVER meet friends or family for lunch during the working week.



Sidekick –Greg as Ken in Cuckoo



Dan the man – Greg Davies in Man Down

Greg: I'll get to grips with adulthood in Man Down

By Lisa Williams

SINCE swapping the classroom for the stage over a decade ago, former teacher Greg Davies' comedy career has gone from strength to strength. Now on a path that he loves, he tells Week-end how taking that leap of faith has transformed him into a 'far more bearable human being'.

Shropshire-born Greg Davies is, entirely by his own admission, an 'intrinsically lazy man'.

"I'd love to sit back – it's that thing (where) I don't have a choice," he cries, in reference to his hectic workload. "I'm very lucky that I've got these things to do, so I do them and I love them, but given the choice I honestly wouldn't get off my sofa."

"I am an absolute nightmare," he concludes, shaking his head. "Awful!"

The teacher-turned-stand-up comedian has good reason to remain vertical, however, for this autumn alone he has embarked on his biggest ever live tour, *You Magnificent Beast*; returned to his throne for a fifth series of the brilliant *Taskmaster*; and is once again starring in his self-penned midlife crisis sitcom, *Man Down*.

Having enjoyed such success with the Channel 4 hit *Man Down*, he assures me he feels 'more relaxed than I ever have' awaiting the fourth series' reception.

"Normally I'm just absolutely bricking myself, but this time I'm really sure if you like *Man Down*, you'll like this," says Greg, 49. "I could be wrong, but it's in a similar vein and if anything, we've pushed the levels of madness."

"I'm not saying (this one) wasn't hard work," he quickly adds. "The writing process is sickening and stressful and I hate it, but I have seen this series back and I'm really pleased with it."

Desperate

Having 'found its groove', fans can expect another frenetic dose of disaster as child-trapped-in-a-man's-body Dan (Greg) is blinkered by unrealistic hopes for his impending fatherhood. He's quit his much-hated job as a teacher and, looking for a fresh start, is on an increasingly desperate hunt to find a new home for his soon-to-be family.

Add aggressive geese, desperate attempts to fit in at Dads' Club and the pressure of a christening to the mix and, as expected, there's little that doesn't conspire to keep this *Man Down*.

"I think he's just everyone's loser, isn't he?" Greg says. "For me I've taken actual weak aspects of my own character and put them in him – only we don't give him any of the coping strategies."



Hapless hero – Greg's character Dan is down on his luck in *Man Down* on Channel 4 on Wednesday nights at 10pm

Grimacing, he follows: "I am of the belief that we're all winging it – none of us know how to do life, really. Some of us are pretending we do, but with *Man Down* it's fun to see someone who is openly winging it and hasn't been given the strategies to even disguise his folly or to learn."

"But I love that he never learns," he continues. "I love that he is so self-involved; we've taken the ugly aspects of human nature and put them in a bloke, but the redeeming thing we give him is he's relatively loyal and he is a trier," he reasons. "And I think people love a trier." More crucial than the relatable characters, even, is the show's ability to have its audience in hysterics.

"The cloud above everything is, 'Is it funny? Is it going to make people laugh?'" explains Greg, who is the first to admit he struggles to keep it together on set.

"One of the mild frustrations I feel is when *Man Down* is described as 'slapstick'," he states. "We work hard to surprise people in the show and we don't want people to guess where something is going to go. I think that's when we're at our best, when something happens that no one was expecting."

Is the 'torturous' writing process worth

it, then? "It's always worth it. It is, I suppose, my equivalent of having a baby..." he suggests, laughing wildly, before quickly adding: "I don't want to compare it to having a baby. I take that back!"

"But you forget the pain, (and) that's what people I know who've had babies say," he elaborates.

"As soon as we start filming, I forget the pain."

"It's just putting the ideas together," he muses, confessing he has no system other than sitting together in a room with 'funny' co-writers. "You can have ideas and we've got characters that we love now and we know how they're going to react to things, but it's getting those ideas to sit together that's the challenge."

'Birthing' a sitcom is, however, understandably a far cry from Greg's teaching days: a stretch that has inspired much of his comedy since he left the profession over a decade ago.

"I'd always wanted to do comedy, so teaching – although I had great times doing it – was always a bit of an avoidance strategy, if I'm honest," confides the star, who famously played psychotic head of sixth form Mr Gilbert in *The Inbetweeners*.

"I got to the stage where I was so miserable, that it wasn't fair for me to carry on," he confesses. "So (giving comedy a go) was necessity – but it often is with me. I'm often driven by necessity, rather than actually doing things like an adult."

"I'm very like Dan in that regard – in that it takes me to be forced into a corner, before I do something. And I felt I had no choice but to try comedy." A refreshing example of a talent who is as funny off stage as on it, Greg – who was born in Wales but grew up in Shropshire – made a clever move.

Aside from an impressive roster of TV gigs (including anything from panel shows such as *Mock The Week* and *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* to his Bafta-nominated performance in BBC *Three's Cuckoo*), the 6ft 8in comic is selling out stand-up shows country-wide.

He's currently on the road for the aforementioned *You Magnificent Beast* – and he couldn't be happier.

"I love it and I don't understand why I ever hear a comedian complain about it," Greg says of touring. "It's a mystery to me. It's wonderful."

"It appeals to my personality, stand-up, because it's instant gratification."

Game of thrones at village's new pub



Arthur or Alfred at the pub in Hagley, the latest owned by the Black Country's Bathams brewery

IT appears a Game of Thrones is taking place at this pub – with the wrong king given the crowning glory. The pub is named after the legendary King Arthur but King Alfred appears to be the monarch featured on the sign outside.

Brewer Bathams recently opened the pub in Worcester Road, Hagley, and said business is thriving.

The sign appears to resemble a statue of the Anglo Saxon King Alfred from Winchester and has left some people asking if there has been a mix-up. Tim Batham, company co-director, said: "We left it with the sign writer to come up with the ideas but there can't be any portraits of King Arthur as he is mythical."

Tim, who runs Bathams with his brother Matthew, said the name Arthur pays homage to Arthur Batham, who guided the Brierley Hill brewery through the 1950s. Halesowen firm A & H Construction was commissioned to carry out the pub's development by converting an office block.

Hospice to host festive weekend in town

STOURBRIDGE'S first festive community weekend will be held in the grounds of Mary Stevens Hospice and park next month.

The Sparkling Spectacular will take over Stourbridge on December 9 and 10.

Day one of the festive fun weekend will be held in the grounds of the Mary Stevens Hospice in Oldswinford.

Guests will be treated to a Winter Wonderland craft market, live music, an all-day barbecue, children's craft activities, a gift-wrapping service and the chance for children to meet Santa and Rudolph.

By Clare Butler

Laura Millard, community engagement officer at the Mary Stevens Hospice, said: "In our opinion, this time of year is all about coming together as a community and enjoying the remarkable unity that exists here in the Black Country."

"It's our great privilege to be supported by so many families across the region, and we hope that they all enjoy what promises to be a truly unforgettable weekend."

To find out more about the festive weekend or book a package to see Santa and Rudolph call (01384) 377 778, or see marystevenshospice.co.uk/event/stourbridge-sparkling-spectacular website.

Jog

Then on the Sunday, alongside the Hagley Road charity's annual Santa Jog, the festivities will move to Mary Stevens Park where there will be all-day festive food, live bands and entertainment, the opportunity to watch or take part in the Santa Jog and a free family fun day.

Day one is from 10.30am to 4pm and day two from 10am to 4pm. Both days are being sponsored by Stourbridge Motor House.

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ELIZABETH, 45, fed up with lonely nights! Blonde blue eyed, no children/ies, WILTM someone for cosy nights in and TLC. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429221** **Box: 4177148** **Box: 4177148**

SHARON, 48, tall slim attractive, lives alone with no ties, love romanticising and WILTM man for good times together, maybe more. Any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429125** **Box: 4177148**

YAZ, Asian lady, 32yrs, very slim and pretty, hoping to meet a strong minded, dominant, resourceful man. Mature please 45+ **Text Only. Box: 4177148**

SHARON, 48, tall slim attractive, lives alone with no ties, love romanticising and WILTM man for good times together, maybe more. Any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429125** **Box: 4177148**

SOPHIE, 46yrs, attractive professional lady with time on her hands. Hoping to meet a nice gent of any age, text fun, flirt, possible meeting. **Text Only. Box: 4126579**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 70yrs young, slim, fit and young for my age. I'm hoping to meet a kind gent, must have GSOH. age/looks unimportant. Must be smart and good company. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429039** **Box: 4166063**

SARAH black lady, works as a nurse. 48yrs young, hoping to meet a younger man for some fun. Let me be your cougar and dress me up in my uniform. **Text Only. Box: 4166063**

TINA, 58yrs, slim, passionate and kind. Loves eating out. Hoping to meet gent 55-63. **ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429167**

MELANIE, attractive lady, 38yrs, hoping to meet a nice chap, any age, for chats, no complicated times. Must have great sh, looks unimportant. **Text Only. Box: 4037147**

JANE, 45yrs, own home, loves nature, artistic. Love to socialise. WILTM gent any age, must have GSOH. **ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429165**

I am a discreet married black lady who is hoping to meet a man of any colour for some daytime chats, maybe meet up, maybe just text to prolong the interest in our ways. **Text Only. Box 4063856**

VALERIE, caring thoughtful lady. Attractive with GSOH. Seeking similar gent. **ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429163**

GEORGINA, 46yrs, sophisticated professional lady (teacher), quite firm but kind! Interested in finding out more? I am interested to chat to you so call me today. **Text Only. Box: 4151593**

ATTRACTIVE lady, late sixties, hoping to meet a nice chap for walking, winning dining, and much much more. Age unimportant. **ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429161**

ANGELA, 48yrs, seeks no strings casual fun. I have my own house, car and am solvent. I'm busy with a firm figure. You must be open minded, age/status unimportant. **Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 427633**

ATTRACTIVE widow, 70s, solvent, fit and still attractive GSOH, hoping to meet a nice gent for days out, possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429159**

MARIELLE, 45yrs, curvy attractive lady, likes older men. I'm married so you must be discreet. Lets meet up, and make each other smile again. Call me and lets get to know each other. **Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 426853**

FEMALE 46, honest, genuine and caring. Looking for LTR with a male. **Text only replies. Box no: 4209465**

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I am Caroline, 37. If you fancy a chat, are tall, dark and handsome, give this tall, fit female a call. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428943**

JANE, 47, confident full figured and all woman, likes cosy nights in with that special person, looking for friendship, maybe more. Age/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428905**

ATTRACTIVE retired lady, 67yrs. Looks very young with blonde hair and blue eyes. Loves holidays, arts, still interested in meeting a nice man for some fun and laughter. Get in touch by phone or text. **ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428969**

CAROLE Ann, 56, sensitive, slim, fun loving brunette, loves to cook for her man, seeks tall, handsome male for a tactile relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428891**

PAULINE, Sincere lady, 70s, GSOH, OH&C. Curvy with shoulder length dark hair. Varied interests, theatre and travel. WILTM similar minded gent. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428977**

Single Men

COLIN, 50, kind, loving, seeks kind loving, cuddly, large lady, 45-55, for LTR, love and romance. Must have hugs, kisses, cuddles and holding hands. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6091169**

JEFF, 60s, tall, fit, young outlook, N/S, car owner, seeks similar lady for friendship, outings out etc. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428175**

Hi I am a single Indian male in my 50s, and would like to meet a mature female 55+ for a NSA friendship. **Text only replies. Box no: 4627019**

WALSALL male, looking for no strings adult fun, with lady of any nationality, colour or age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428773**

MALE, age 68, very active looking for lady for NSA fun. Can accommodate. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6026972**

EASYGOING likeable man likes a drink at the pub, and nights in front of the telly and a cuddle, looking for lady 45-55. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6066059**

DERBY male, young 57, looking for uncared, unloved married woman looking for discreet adult fun 35-55. Txt me for a good time. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5321154**

MALE seeks affectionate, tactile, no drama, down earth woman for nights in/out and loads of cuddles. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418695**

ADVENTUROUS 36 year old, slim, dark hair, has many interests, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417235**

MALE, attractive, 61/2, single father, loves a laugh and a giggle, looking for a lady for evenings out, company and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424303**

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Taking a Peak at show's premiere

IT is the television drama that put the Black Country and Birmingham firmly on the showbiz map – and now it is back with a bang.

Gangster thriller *Peaky Blinders* returns for a fourth series on BBC Two on November 15.

A celebrity premiere, attracting many of the big cast names, took place in Birmingham on Monday. Cillian Murphy, Helen McCrory, Paul Anderson and newcomer Aidan Gillen, from *Game of Thrones*, walked the red carpet at the Cineworld in Broad Street.

Invited guests watched a screening of the first episode from the fourth series. A question and answer session then took place with the cast.

Filming took place at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley during the summer.

Fans get a selfie with Cillian Murphy, who plays Thomas Shelby in *Peaky Blinders*

Speeding driver in road ban walks free

A **SHOPKEEPER** who was caught speeding in his Mercedes despite being banned from the road has been freed by top judges.

Ahjaz Ali was locked up for seven months at Wolverhampton Crown Court in September.

The 60-year-old admitted fraud and doing acts tending and intending to pervert the course of justice, Mr Justice Green told London's Appeal Court.

Ali, who first passed his driving test at the age of 53, had his licence revoked in September 2010 after he admitted driving without due care and attention. But on May 14, 2014 he took out an online insurance policy declaring he

had a full UK driving licence and no motoring convictions or fixed penalty notices. Ali, of Highland Road, Cradley Heath was then recorded speeding on two occasions on January 20 and sent a notice of intended prosecution.

He did not respond and, when a reminder was sent, he identified someone else as the driver.

The police and DVLA became suspicious and Ali admitted in police interview that he had been driving the Mercedes on both occasions. He gave the false information because he knew his licence had been revoked and 'panicked'.

The judge who jailed Ali said he was 'aware that, had he provided accurate information to the police, it would have been discovered he was banned from driving'.

He was, however, of previous good character and had a 'high-standing in the community', the court heard.

Ali's lawyers argued his jail term should have been suspended.

They pointed to him being the owner of a shop which opens from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week.

Mr Justice Green ruled: "There were strong reasons for considering that immediate custody was not necessary and a suspended sentence would suffice. The judge failed sufficiently to address alternatives to immediate custody."

"The appeal is therefore allowed," said the judge, sitting with Lord Justice Simon and Judge Mark Brown.

He concluded: "A sentence of six months imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, is imposed."

StarReader

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Simple steps homeowners can take now to protect their assets

Head of April King Legal Paul King explains why some homeowners are doing too little, too late to protect their hard-earned assets.



Paul King, Head of April King Legal

1. Care Cost Fees

A lot of people are still unaware that if they need care in later life, their assets will be means-tested by the local authority to help pay for these services. This goes back to the Community Care Act 1990, which came into force in 1993. If someone requires social care in later life, the local authority will look to use the assets of a person until they get down to a lower limit of £14,250, when the local authority will take over the fees.

Paul knows this all too well, after experiencing this personally. "My own grandmother sadly passed away recently at the age of 92. My grandfather had died many years earlier and left everything to her.

When she needed care in the last six years of her life, because my grandfather had left everything to her, the house and all the estate were counted in the local authority's means test.

Our clients tell us, 'We've worked hard all our lives, why should the local authority get it all?'

Just as she died, she had gone down to that lower limit of £14,250 – and that's all that her children inherited."

There are many myths about the steps people can take to protect their assets from being used like this. The main one is that a parent should simply sign their house over to the children now, so it won't be taken into consideration for means testing. That's just not true.

Local authorities will actually look to see if you've 'deliberately deprived' yourself of an asset by giving yourself away, going back over any period in time.

Sometimes people think if the gift is made seven years prior then the house is safe.

This is not so as the seven-year rule only applies to Inheritance Tax and not local authority care.

The solution is for couples to simply not leave everything to each other in the first place.

Paul continues: "What my grandfather could have done is leave his half of the house in trust to his children, stating that they couldn't have it while his wife, my grandmother, was still alive. We call these Property Trust Wills.

If my grandfather had left his half of the house in trust to the children then when my grandmother subsequently received care in her later life she would have only been means tested on her own half of the house, but my grandfather's half would have been safe.

Why should he have to contribute his half when he didn't receive any care?

The important factor is that couples need to act in advance. Once one party dies or loses mental capacity, through a stroke for example, they are no longer in a position to do this legitimate and straightforward type of planning.

It is therefore important for couples to act now even if they may not foresee care fees being an issue."

Paul goes on to explain a further important point. Most clients he sees are surprised to learn that remarriage usually cancels a will and makes the new spouse next in line to inherit, ahead of their own children!

Protecting your half of the house in this way, he suggests, ensures that your children ultimately inherit when the survivor dies.

"Had my grandmother remarried after the death of my grandfather the whole estate could have passed sideways out of the family," says Paul.

It's another important reason for home-owning couples to upgrade to a Property Trust Will.

2. Bloodline Trust Wills

The majority of April King's clients have already made standard "mirror wills" with other firms before approaching the firm. A mirror will is when a couple leave everything to each other on the first death, then to the children when the second partner dies. But modern family life means these type of wills leave a lot to chance.

Explains Paul: "If I have a mirror will leaving everything to my wife and she remarries or goes into care after my death then either the new husband or the local authority are likely to inherit most, if not all, of my estate ahead of my children.

Even if my children are named in my mirror will it is by no means certain that they will inherit anything.

Once again, this is because a remarriage would cancel the will my wife had previously made with me and make the new husband next-of-kin. This often comes as a big shock to my clients who had perhaps thought that all was in order and that the family bloodline would one day inherit.

The same is true for thinking that their children and/or grandchildren will one day benefit under a mirror will. If any of your children should die leaving everything to their husband or wife and that son-in-law or daughter-in-law should then remarry, then your grandchildren would be the ones to lose out under the line of inheritance.

Worse still, someone else's grandchildren would be in line to receive the benefit of all your years of hard work!

I've experienced this in my own family and I'm sure most people have had similar experiences or heard of someone who has. Bloodline trusts will give greater protection to your children."

Paul continues: "These things can be avoided by having a bloodline trusts will. Under these types of wills your children have complete control

and access to the inheritance they receive from you but give added protection from the twists and turns of modern family life. The wording in these wills states that any money left over on their demise must pass to any children born of them – your grandchildren."

3. Lasting Power of Attorney

Paul explains how people often get confused thinking that, because they have made a will, their executors can also deal with assets if there is illness, stroke or some other form of incapacity while they are still alive.

"Everyone should actually have two documents – a will that deals with their estate on death, and a lasting power of attorney that deals with their estate during their lifetime," he says.

The lasting power of attorney is a relatively new introduction and is divided into two parts – one deals with finance, the other deals with health and welfare. In many ways it's similar to a passport; a document that's registered now and one which can be physically handed to the attorneys should the need arise. It allows the attorneys, perhaps the children, to deal with banks and pension companies etc should their parent become incapacitated, but also to deal with matters such as where the parent should be living and how they receive care. Your attorneys, again perhaps your children, must legally act in your best interests at all times. You can choose a number of attorneys to act, either jointly or independently, and April King advises on the various options available.

Couples are often surprised to discover that even joint bank accounts can be frozen until the bank sees sight of a lasting power of attorney document

Having a lasting power of attorney removes the burden on children should ill-health happen further down the line. It helps a family deal with bank accounts and so on during a parent's lifetime and ceases on death. Crucially, you have to complete a lasting power of attorney while they are still in good mental health.

If someone becomes ill through say, a stroke or dementia, this option is lost and the family would have to apply for an order from the Court of Protection – a drawn out and expensive process. It is therefore a good idea for clients to plan ahead and remove any future burden from the family.

Once again, all adults should be thinking of this, particularly where there are children or a business involved. It's not just something to think about when you get older, that's the challenge for us.

People think 'I'm not ill, why do I need to make a power of attorney?'

But they're missing the point. This is a document that has to be done in advance. Paul adds: "The next part is to appoint the attorneys, your children. Don't forget, your children can be the executors of your will and attorneys as well. The lasting power of attorney remains in place until you die unless you want to cancel it. Once it's registered, you don't have to worry if you then develop some debilitating illness. A burden has been removed from the family at an already difficult time."



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If you have sent in pictures and they have not appeared on the page don't worry. We have not got space to carry them all but they will all be considered for the shortlist, then we will print the 10 chosen.

It is going to be a difficult job for you readers to judge the winner.

So keep the pictures coming in.



Send us a picture of your beloved pet and, as well as the chance to see your pet in print, you could also win a £100 cash prize. It can be any animal as

long as it is a pet belonging to you or a member of your family.

Our Chronicle judges are simply looking for interesting pictures. We will select 10 of our favourite pictures and then it is up to our readers to decide on the winner.

To enter email the images to sue.attwater@expressandstar.co.uk with your name and details, including where you are from and information about your pet.



Are you in Year 9 or Year 11 and
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Open Evening

Tuesday 7 November 2017, 5:30pm - 7:30pm



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Commercial feature

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Health Futures University Technical College (UTC), based in High Street, West Bromwich, offers educational experiences and opportunities rarely if ever seen in traditional schools and colleges.

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Why choose Health Futures UTC? In September 2015 we opened the doors of our brand new multi-million pound building in West Bromwich. Over 250 regional students interested in careers in healthcare and health science sectors joined Health Futures for the first time, putting them on the pathway to an exciting educational experience.



Working in the simulation ward, just one area of study at Health Futures UTC

We are now accepting applications from young people living in Birmingham, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Solihull and North Worcestershire who would like to join us as Year 10 or Year 12 students in September 2018.

The first UTC in the UK with healthcare and health sciences as its specialism, Health Futures prepares

students for a wide range of health related careers that span the NHS, Public Health, public sector agencies, private industry, voluntary and charitable institutes, and community organisations – locally, nationally and across the globe.

The open evening takes place on Tuesday November 7, from 5.30pm-7pm.

Helping to put you on path to success



Achievement levels for Halesowen College students are excellent



Apprenticeships are growing in popularity at Halesowen College



Staff support all students throughout their Halesowen experience

Thinking about the future and seeing yourself in the career of your choice can seem like a distant dream while you are still concentrating on your GCSEs but visiting Halesowen College and talking to friendly and informative staff can turn your dream into a reality.

Go along to the open events on Friday, November 3, between 4pm and 8pm and Saturday, November 4, between 10am and 4pm to discover how the college can help you take your own personal route to success.

By making Halesowen College your number one choice, you will be able to choose from the

Commercial feature

region's biggest range of courses, at all levels and an ability to combine subjects will help you to tailor a programme that best suits you. Whether you have your sights on university, a vocational qualification or an apprenticeship, the highly professional staff will be available to give you advice and guidance and help at every stage of the decision-making process.

Achievement levels for Halesowen College students are excellent and progression to further and higher education and employment is outstanding. This year, 98 per cent of

students achieved an A-level pass and 31 per cent attained high grades A*, A or B – 32 subjects achieved an outstanding 100 per cent pass rate! Vocational results were equally impressive, with 222 students gaining Triple Distinction Star grades in their Level 3 Extended Diplomas. As a result over 750 Halesowen students have progressed to university this autumn.

Apprenticeships are also growing in popularity and Halesowen College offers an exciting range of opportunities for you to get the qualifications that employers are looking for, while earning a wage.

Apprentices are highly likely to secure permanent employment at the end of their programme – 93.7 per cent of Halesowen apprentices who completed their apprenticeship in 2016/17 progressed to full-time employment.

Visitors to the college's open events will also have the opportunity to see for themselves the fantastic facilities students enjoy in a modern and easily accessible campus.

All curriculum areas have benefitted in the last few years from an extensive development programme and whether your interests are academic, scientific, technological or creative,

Halesowen College is one of the best equipped colleges to help you succeed.

A college spokesman said: "Our students are at the heart of everything we do and we want to support them throughout their Halesowen experience." "Students can access support from their personal coach and learning support staff.

"Financial assistance is also available and nine out of 10 of our current students travel to Halesowen on our free college buses.

"Make Halesowen College your number one choice. Come to our Open Events, meet staff and students and see yourself as having the successful future you deserve."

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2017

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A vintage picture of Moseley Old Hall, now managed by the National Trust



Roundheads put a bounty on the king's head



The young Charles Stuart, later restored as Charles II



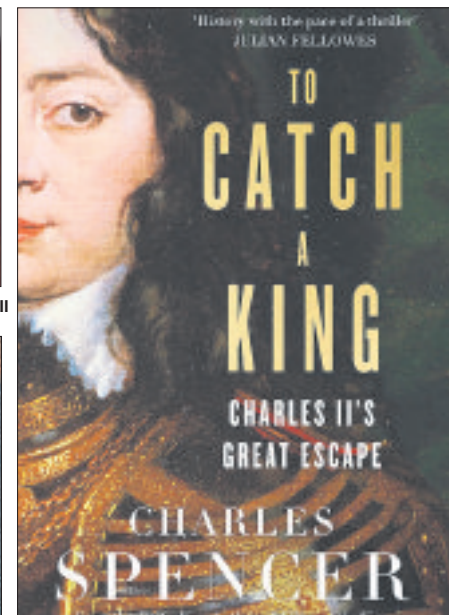
An old picture of Boscobel House, now managed by English Heritage



The tree at Boscobel said to be where the king hid



Thomas Whitgreave, owner of Moseley Hall



The new book by Charles Spencer about the king's escape

The great escape of a fugitive king

WE don't think of the English as particularly rebellious or revolutionary but we killed our king and declared a republic long before the French.

It's just that we changed our minds after a decade of po-faced Puritans and dictator Oliver Cromwell.

King Charles I lost his head in 1649 and his eldest son would have followed him to the block two years later if it wasn't for some

brave and resourceful West Midlands folk. Historian and aristocrat Charles Spencer (the Earl, brother of Princess Diana) looks at the young Charles II's desperate escape after the bloody battle of Worcester finally ended the Civil Wars in Parliament's favour.

Catholic

This saw the king and small band of supporters roving across our region, depending on local Catholic families to hide him from the Roundhead search parties.

This included the famous day spent hid-

ing in an oak tree at Boscobel House (hence all those pubs called the Royal Oak) and crammed into a hiding hole at Moseley Old Hall, near Wolverhampton.

In what was becoming the Black Country, with the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, Charles Stuart and his Royalist officers face a night time ride through Stourbridge, where Roundhead troops are based, speaking French so the locals think them immigrant Huguenot glassmakers, as the French Protestant craftsmen are common in the town.

The future 'Merry Monarch' also has banter

with a Rowley Regis blacksmith who tells the disguised monarch what a rogue the king is. Luckily for him the king sees the funny side.

Spencer's book zips along with the speed of a thriller as it reveals a fascinating episode of British history which largely took place on our doorsteps.

Kinver, Pattingham, Madeley and Newport also get a mention, as does Wolverhampton where the king's sympathisers learn about Parliament's search for the king. They placed a bounty of £1,000 on his head, in those days a fortune, the equivalent to a lifetime's wages.

Charles emerges as a complex character, a highly self-entitled young man and a womaniser, sometimes self-pitying and sometimes heroic with a sense of humour and apparently a good mimic of the Midlands accent. The real heroes are the Whitgreave, Giffard and Penderel families, and other Catholics, who risked their lives to save the king, paving the way for his return to the throne a decade later.

To Catch A King by Charles Spencer is published in hardback by William Collins, £20.

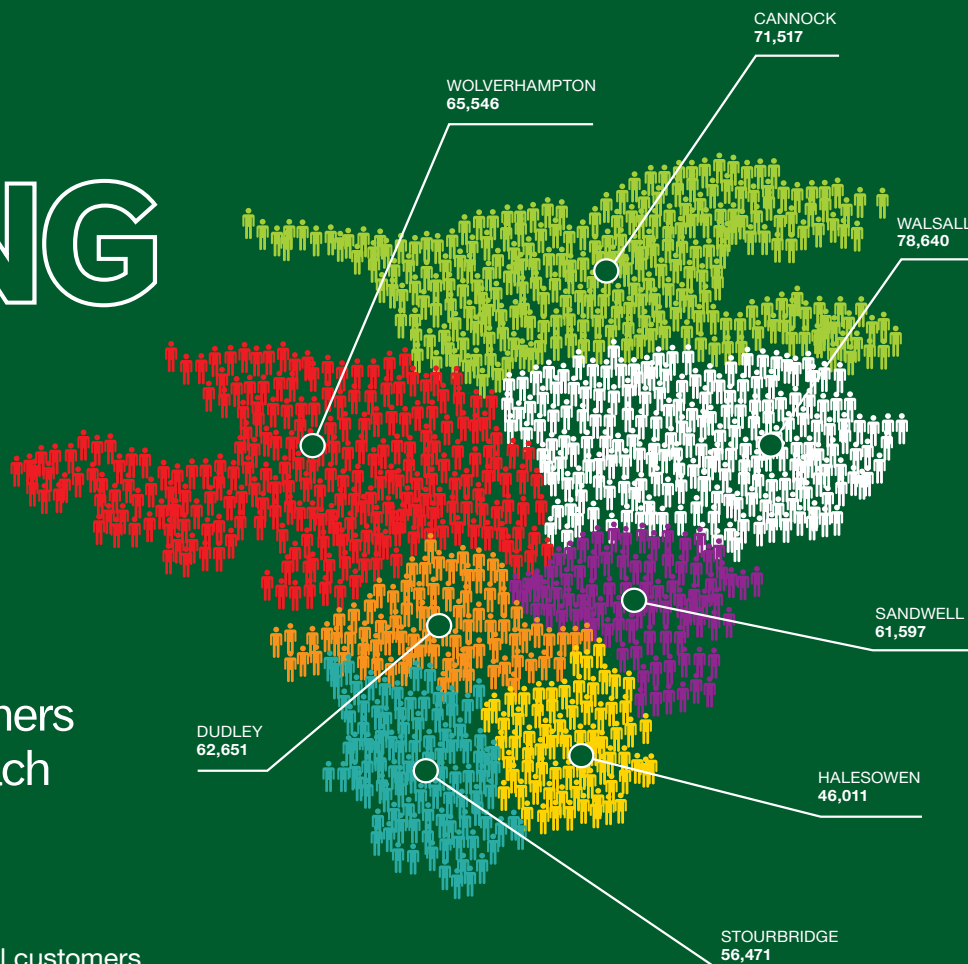
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Problems postpone 'moon bear' concert

A ONE-OFF unique charity show starring Rick Wakeman and led by a Black Country production company has been called off.

The ambitious Over the Moon show, arranged by Stourbridge-based Base Video Productions, has been postponed after hitting 'unforeseen technical and practical problems.'

Keyboards supremo Wakeman, who was at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre this week, and international artist Maria Rud were leading the Over the Moon show.

A-list stars Ricky Gervais, Joanna Lumley and Peter Egan all took part in a video urging people to support the show which was taking place at the spectacular Queen's House in Greenwich, London, on December 10, in aid of the charity Animals Asia.

Live

The show aimed to combine art, music and architecture. The former Yes musician's compositions were to be translated into live artworks by Rud, painting onto a lightbox, and her creations then projected onto the building. Audience members would stand, sit or move around watching Wakeman and Rud closely as they collaborated on their art.

The Over the Moon set promised a blend of classic Wakeman material with new compositions written especially for the event.

Lined up to go on stage with Rick was son Adam, percussionist Ed Scull and leading London vocal ensemble the English Chamber Choir, conducted by Guy Protheroe.

The pioneering show is being arranged by Base Video Production which was founded by Andy Dingley and Warren Evans and is based in Rufford Road.

But it was announced this week



Keyboard wizard Rick Wakeman, formerly of Yes, was performing

that though the difficulties could all be overcome, this was not possible in the current timescale.

A statement says: "So the decision was made to actively look for a new date in 2018 in order to ensure this very special and unique event achieves everything it should."

"Potential dates in 2018 are already being considered and as soon as a firm date is set then further announcements will be made."

The show was organised in aid of wildlife charity Animals Asia, which campaigns to end the bear bile trade.

More than 10,000 moon bears or



Artist Maria Rud was due to create projected images live to music

Asiatic black bears are caged on bile farms in China, according to Animals Asia figures.

Animals Asia has rescued over 600 bears, caring for them at its award-winning bear sanctuaries in China and Vietnam. The 'moon bears' are kept on farms where they are locked up in cages for years with bile extracted from their gallbladder daily. The bile is used for medical reasons such as the treatment of rheumatism.

Tickets were sold at £32 for standard or £84 VIP. Anyone who has bought tickets will be contacted for a refund or reallocation to the rearranged show.

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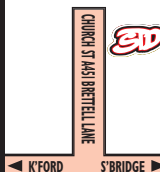
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Warm up your home with some vintage light

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips



IT'S definitely getting colder and rather wintry so this week I thought we'd take a look at how you can warm up your homes with a little vintage light and colour!

Candles are the obvious choice when it comes to creating a cosy atmosphere so look out for candlesticks and tea-light holders.

You can pick up some lovely old silver candlesticks for very reasonable prices in the saleroom, also those nice little round china, enamel and pottery candle-holders with handles.

Tea-lights can be housed in a variety of holders and look really good in old china tea-cups and on small vintage plates.

Strategically placed lamps can also add some much-needed light and colour, especially the Tiffany ones with the beautifully decorated shades.

Think about warm colours and how you can add small vintage pieces that might bring some extra cheer to a particular room.

Brightly-coloured china and pottery jugs are ideal for a dining room and why not fill vases with dried flowers for hallways and sitting rooms?

Mood

Prints, posters and paintings can change really alter the mood of any room and again can be bought on a limited budget at auction.

Look out for colourful vintage rugs, cushions and tablecloths and also for copper items for a kitchen – copper and brass pieces always look cheerful on an autumn day.

Coloured glass bottles grouped together on a windowsill look great, as do collections of vintage wine glasses on display, and look out for china trios with floral designs to remind you that spring WILL come around again!

As with all vintage items, check for signs of wear and tear before you buy and stick to your budget when buying at auction – remember that Christmas is just around the corner!

- Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.
- The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables takes place at the Mill Street saleroom in Low Town, Bridgnorth, on Tuesday, December 5 – our Christmas auction. Viewing will be during the weekend and on Monday and also from 10am on auction day. New sale bidders are advised to attend the saleroom early on auction day to register and be allocated a bidding number.
- Perry and Phillips hold sales on the first Tuesday of every other month.



Scruffy shoes a sign of throwaway society



Demand is declining for shoe repairs

I WAS walking my little dog this week, passing a bus stop as the passengers alighted.

There was a stunning young girl beautifully dressed in all black, stylish, amazing make up, curled blonde long hair and an expensive bag hanging from her arm but her shoes were unbelievable, they were worn, dirty and untidy and absolutely spoilt the overall appearance.

It was a massive shame but sadly a thing I see far too often.

I was always told to ensure my nails were clean and tidy and nail varnish unchipped, my shoes polished and my handshake firm and I have followed this rule all my working life. Nails and hair are so important these days, money spent on keeping them perfect but sadly the polished shoes have disappeared. There are so many inexpensive products available to make life simple, wipe on shoe cleaners, trainer whitener, nubuck scuff eraser, gel cleaner, stain remover and waterproofing liquids. Our throwaway society seems to have lost the need to protect our shoes with a preference of replacing them.

Footwear fabrics have improved year on year and there are so many mock leathers

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis



that are incredibly realistic and perform well. These fabrics are durable and realistic they also require less maintenance and can be washed. They can be dyed to a vast variety of colours, produced with textures and patterns and are easier to cut and sew, however, they do not stretch, breathe or develop a delightful patina over time as real leather does and is so much more difficult to repair if damaged. The designers love the versatile fabrics now available for their footwear but the top of the range items still sport the best of real leathers.

As a teenager I used to have my shoes heeled regularly and I cleaned and polished them weekly.

As fashion items they lasted no longer but they always looked good and I still have some of those pairs today. Interestingly they no longer fit as our feet get slightly bigger as we

get older but they are still wearable despite their age.

Women love shoes, we collect them, hoard them, we match them to our newest clothing, we suffer in heels and exercise in the latest sport styles, they cost so much and we push them aside for the next necessary trend.

Our local shoe repairer The Shropshire Cobbler in Queen Street, Market Drayton, tells me he rarely repairs fashion styles and the shoes requiring repair are becoming less and less. He is a craftsman, his skills a rarity. Thankfully in a rural society leather boots are still worn and highly priced, (at least where wellies are not necessary) the owners needing them to last. It is worth considering having your favourite pair of shoes repaired and not throwing them in the bin, if you love them, keep them! You do need to look after them, ensure your "power dressing" is unspoilt by tatty footwear and teach your children to look after what they wear.

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Pole dancing offers a full body workout - now it could become an Olympic sport



In her pole fitness studio, Taryn Moore, of Ironbridge, instructs Victoria Hedges and Leila Martin

Activity in pole position to become Olympic sport



It boosts flexibility and balance

IF you still think pole dancing is all about seedy clubs – and even seedier clientele – then you've got some catching up to do.

Firstly, it's boomed in popularity as a workout method in recent years (and a bloomin' hard one at that – seriously, have you seen the muscles on these polers?). Secondly, it's now looking like it might become an Olympic sport.

This week, the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) confirmed it's given observer status to the International Pole Sports Federation (IPSF), which hopefully means a 'clear pathway' towards full Olympic recognition eventually.

It's exciting – and well-deserved – news for thousands of pole fans, who know exactly how brilliant and beneficial it can be, both physically and psychologically. Here, pole aficionados Sarah-Jayne Bell and Tara Margulies tell us what's so great about it...

IT'S A FULL-BODY WORKOUT

Sarah-Jayne, who runs PPD STUDIOS, home of Princess Pole Dancing, explains that pole helps improve both strength and cardio. "The main physical benefits include core work, cardio, muscle strength and conditioning and increased flexibility and endurance. The moves incorporated really

Report by Abi Jackson

target the whole body, working with your body weight as resistance," she says. "The spins, lifts and holds target the core, while putting together and performing a routine brings the cardio element."

IT BOOSTS FLEXIBILITY AND BALANCE

"Increased flexibility, co-ordination and balance come from regular practise. While a strong core can help with a bad back and reduces your chance of injury, both during exercise and in your daily life," adds Sarah-Jayne, who has "fought for acceptance and respect for pole dancing for nearly 12 years", so is thrilled by the news that it's in the running to become an Olympic sport.

IT'S A 'HAPPY HOBBY'

"It's important to remember the mental and emotional benefits too," says Sarah-Jayne. "I love the fact that you don't have to be good at pole to enjoy it! The excitement of nailing a new move, combined with the endorphins from exercising make pole a really happy hobby. Perfect for well-earned stress relief after a long hard week!"

YOU'LL BE AMAZED WHAT YOUR BODY CAN DO

Pole fans often sport seriously impressive physiques and moves – but even they had to start somewhere. "You'll learn to move

your body in ways you may not think are possible, improving your strength, movement and flexibility along the way," says fitness instructor, pole fan and blogger Tara, who recently wrote a blog post about her "pole journey".

BOOST YOUR BODY CONFIDENCE

"Laughter and friendship come hand-in-hand with pole classes," says Sarah-Jayne. "It can help with self-confidence and body confidence – you learn to love your body for what it can do and to be genuinely proud of your achievements."

THE COMPLEX CHOREOGRAPHY

The routines can be complicated, balletic and technical – and it's basically very impressive gymnastics, on a pole. "As well as working wonders for your body, you'll experience an inevitable boost in confidence when you start to flow with grace and realise that your tricks look beautiful."

IT'S EMPOWERING

While pole is now widely recognised as a seriously impressive and skilled workout, there's still a big element of performance. For some, the sexiness is part of the appeal – and there ain't nothing wrong with that! "It is acceptable to pole in 7-inch stilettos in the pole world, and once you forget about society's opinion, finding your inner sexy is so unbelievably empowering," says Tara.

Severn Trent hit by £700k fraud over housing sales

FIVE men defrauded Severn Trent Water out of around £700,000 by fraudulently selling properties owned by the company, a court heard.

A jury sitting at Birmingham Crown Court was told how 50-year-old Edward Barker joined Severn Trent in June 2009 and was employed to manage their housing stock portfolio.

Barker identified a total of 21 houses to sell in the Midlands – including ones in Stourbridge, Oldbury, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Barker, of Wake Green Park, Moseley, Birmingham, undervalued these properties through fake valuations and failed to advertise the sale to the public.

The houses were instead sold to his friends and associates at an artificially-low price and then sold at full price.

Complaint

Following a complaint made by a member of the public to the utility company relating to the lack of marketing, Severn Trent conducted an internal investigation.

Barker, Manoj Chohan, Terry Croft, of Cheltenham, and Dinesh Chudasama, of Sparkhill, Birmingham denied the charges but were all found guilty of conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation.

A judge sentenced Barker to three years in jail, 49-year-old Chohan, of Birmingham to 21 months suspended for two years, 50-year-old Croft to a 12-month community order with 120 hours of unpaid work and 51-year-old Chudasama to a two year term which was suspended for two years.

A fifth man, 44-year-old Matthew Biggin, of Coventry, pleaded guilty to the fraud at an earlier hearing and was sentenced to 12 months, suspended for two years.

Box-it Bill aims to prove big hit in the ring



He's been known as a political bruiser but now UKIP politician Bill Etheridge is really ready to trade blows

HE'S had his fair share of verbal battles over the years, but now Bill Etheridge is getting ready to rumble in a charity boxing scrap.

The UKIP Euro MP is strapping on the gloves for the first time to raise funds for the homelessness charity New Roots.

kebab for boiled eggs and tuna as he bids to meet his fighting weight.

The Sedgley councillor is being put through his paces at the Ultimate Fitness gym in Bilston, while a new diet has seen him ditch the meat pies and

Slow progress poses danger to venue plan

THE restoration of Dudley Hippodrome could be under threat after a council leader said he believed 'not much progress' had been made by campaigners trying to save the landmark former theatre.

Patrick Harley admitted the authority had started to think about other uses for the building on Castle Hill in the event of the rescue not being a success.

The council leader said the Black Country Hippodrome group had been given a 'generous amount of time to get their act together to make a viable business case for retaining the Hippodrome'.

A report is due to go to cabinet on the next step in the saga. A previous council plan had been to demolish the building to create a public open space.

Campaigners have requested a 20-year extension to its current five-year lease which they say is too short to attract investment.

Councillor Harley insisted they would continue to have the council's support if they could 'meet their milestones' but suggested time could be running out.

Control of Dudley Council switched from Labour to the Conservatives in May but Councillor Harley denied he and senior colleagues were lukewarm about the restoration of the building.

Wrestling night to help charity

A PROFESSIONAL wrestling show will raise funds for a children's epilepsy charity on November 10 at 6.30pm at the British Legion in Ruiton Street, Dudley. Entrance to the show for The Daisy Garland charity costs

£10 for adults, £6 children or £25 for a family ticket. Contact 07874141170 or 07855276573.

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BLOW away the cobwebs and take inspiration from a wealth of autumn walks where you can appreciate flora and fauna in dazzling shades of burnt orange, warm yellows and deep burgundies.

Here are some of the country's best...

KILLERTON, DEVON

Admire the pallet of colours offered in this garden, including the deep orange berries of the Chinese scarlet rowan, the red berries and furry leaves of the *Cotoneaster lacteus*, and the *Zelkova carpinifolia* turning a deep, buttery yellow.

CRARAE GARDEN, ARGYLL

A spectacular 50-acre woodland garden in a dramatic setting, Crarae has a wonderful collection of woody plants centred on the Crarae Burn, which is spanned by several bridges and tumbles through a rocky gorge in a series of cascades. The lush, naturalistic planting and rushing water gives the feel of a Himalayan valley.

FELBRIGG, NORFOLK

The Great Wood on the Felbrigg estate is full of interesting fungi in the autumn. After inspecting these, look up to see the bright copper leaves of the *Victory V* beeches. It's worth taking a detour (at point 6 on the route) down Lion's Mouth in autumn. The route feels like you are walking into the jaws of a lion with the tunnel of colour provided from the trees.

FOUNTAINS ABBEY AND STUDLEY ROYAL, NORTH YORKSHIRE

The sweeping landscape of Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal is full of autumn colour at this time of year. One of the rangers has designed a deer park walk through the estate which gives you the chance to see the deer rut as well as the beautiful autumn colours.

GIBSIDE, TYNE AND WEAR

Buzzing with wildlife, Gibside is home to red kites, roe deer and many other rare animals. During the autumn months, you can see the colours changing on the trees below as you rise out of the Derwent Valley on this circular skyline walk offering plenty of opportunities for panoramic views.

MOUNT STEWART, COUNTY DOWN

Voted one of the top 10 gardens in the world, Mount Stewart reflects a rich tapestry of design and planting artistry bearing the hallmark of

its creator - Edith, Lady Londonderry. There are walks for everyone, from a short stroll around the gardens to longer walks around the lake and woodlands. The lake is particularly beautiful in autumn with gorgeous red and gold foliage. The banks are lined with primulas, irises and large-leaved gunneras.

DINAS ISLAND, PEMBROKESHIRE (top)

This circular walk on Dinas Island boasts some of the finest views anywhere on the Pembrokeshire coast. In early autumn, the coastal slopes are cloaked with the yellows and browns of fading bracken, while on the headland, the pinks and purples of common heather are just coming in to bloom, alongside the yellow gorse flowers.

DUNSTER, SOMERSET (above left)

A walk to the keep of the castle rewards visitors with a 360-degree view taking in Dunkery Beacon (the highest point on Exmoor) and the Bristol Channel. The south terrace offers views across the former deer park which will be full of colour and the opportunity to spot red deer. The area has a Mediterranean feel due to its microclimate which enables tender plants to thrive, including a row of Chusan palms.

WINKWORTH ARBORETUM, SURREY

During the autumn months, the splendour of Winkworth Arboretum comes to life with rich, blazing colour from the Japanese, American and Norwegian maples. The 2.5-mile walk to Oakhurst weaves its way through the woodland to the top of Hydon's Ball, where you can enjoy spectacular views across the landscape.

Visit www.nts.org.uk and www.nationaltrust.org.uk



Energy companies may be charging you incorrectly

Check your energy bills – there may be a mistake

HOUSEHOLDERS are advised to check their bills carefully as a recent survey has shown that billing mistakes by energy companies have cost customers on average £79 each.

Midlands energy expert Ron Fox said switching website uSwitch.com believed these errors had put 1.3 million residents out of pocket by more than £102 million and it had taken some of them an average of 35 days to recover their money.

"With Christmas round the corner autumn is when many people review their finances and that should include their energy bills," said Mr Fox, of Noreus Ltd at Keele, Staffordshire.

"Households are already feeling the pinch from recent price rises, and having to chase for an average of five weeks to get their money back simply adds insult to injury," he added.

Almost one in three of those affected by the billing blunders, or 28 per cent, said they were charged for an amount that did not match the meter readings they had supplied.

A quarter, or 26 per cent, said their bill did not

add up correctly. Other billing blunders included suppliers getting direct debit amounts wrong (eight per cent), applying incorrect fees (seven per cent) and mixing up one bill with someone else's (five per cent).

However, uSwitch.com said the billing errors could be higher, since more than a quarter of consumers (27 per cent) admitted to not reading their energy bills at all because they were too complicated.

But the energy trade body Ofgem has hit back at the report, claiming that suppliers have managed to reduce their overall number of complaints by two million.

A spokesman said: "We have taken strong action to address billing failures by suppliers, with suppliers paying out over £40m as a result."

Mr Fox supported uSwitch.com who are calling for market regulator Ofgem and suppliers to dramatically reduce billing errors, reimburse customers within a month, and issue bills that are easier to understand.

Gardens that bring life to the concrete jungle

Report by Hannah Stephenson

AS charities such as the RHS and Groundwork continue their work to green grey Britain, creating green spaces within urban sprawls, community gardens are becoming more important than ever.

Over the next 12 months, organic drinks brand Honest and environmental regeneration charity Groundwork.org.uk will be working together to bring more green spaces and gardens to busy urban areas.

Groundwork community gardener Sean Gifford helps local groups set up community gardens in a range of areas from housing estates to disused parking lots.

He meets with community groups and takes them through the process, from design to plant selection.

"Our mission is about greening grey spaces, often areas with a lot of concrete, with high levels of social isolation and often crime," says Sean.

"Usually in urban city spaces there's not much biodiversity. Green spaces help people relax and feel healthier."

Ben Coles, Groundwork director of communities and environmental services, offers the following advice on how local people can get a community garden off the ground:

BUILD SOME MOMENTUM BEHIND THE IDEA

Find out how many people are interested in it – the more momentum from locals who are keen to do it, the more voices you have to be heard.

Organise a meeting with neighbours to see how it could be taken forward.

"You are always going to have one or two champions among groups who are excited about growing food and setting up gardens near their homes," says Coles.

"It's those champions who need to get a few other people on board and find a spot. Land is key."

CHECK SPACE AVAILABILITY

Find a spot you think would be suitable. It might be at the edge of a park, or a small wooded area or simply an open disused space. Speak to your local authority partner or landowners or whoever is responsible for the land. Contact your housing department, landlord or housing association.

CONSIDER FUNDING

Sometimes the councils will refer you to an organisation that can help, other times the residents will find their own sponsorship.

This might come through local businesses, a charity, or with guidance through organisations such as the Federation of Community Farms & City Gardens (www.farmgarden.org.uk).

Grants are given by charities, lottery funding and corporate sponsors, although communities also try to raise money by or-



Community gardens bring a flash of greenery to grey urban areas – and are a great way of bringing people together



Julia Bradbury (centre) and Ben Coles (right) back community gardens



Children can learn about gardening and the outdoors

ganising local fund-raising events and there is some crowd-funding.

MOVING FORWARD

"We would look at the needs, from designing and constructing a growing space to providing people like Sean to help the groups get up and running, and to recognise that some of them don't know a lot about what they can grow and how they would look after it. It's always a tailored response," says Coles.

"Our approach would be to get them to the point where they are happy and confi-

dent enough to look after the spaces themselves. It's recognising how much support they are going to need. Are they good gardeners who might just need a refresher? Or are they complete beginners?"

IT MAY NOT BE EASY

Ken Elkes, spokesman for the Federation of Community Farms and City Gardens, says: "The bottom line is that most groups run on a shoestring and find it difficult to get enough income to sustain and expand their community gardens."

"There's a lot less funding around than

there used to be because local councils have less money and because of the popularity of community gardens there's more competition for the funding that is available.

"But there are ways of starting up and sustaining a community garden. Most don't need a huge amount of money. Most people start out as a group who come together and do everything on a voluntary basis. We can give advice on funding opportunities and have access to information and resources, acting as a conduit between the members and corporate sponsors."



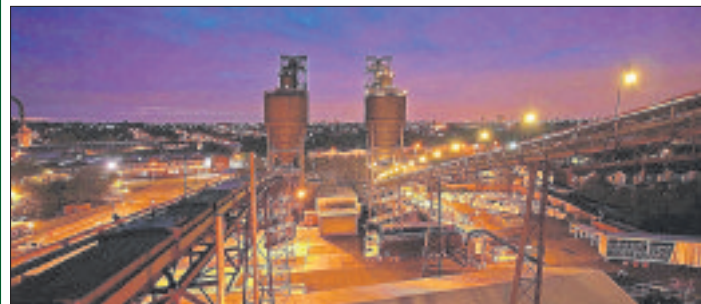
The broken Goodyear sign outside the deserted factory



Unusual image of works



Mike's work brings to life the Goodyear site



Dramatic colours as the factory works through the night



The Goodyear chimney standing proud



Once so busy the Goodyear site is now a memory

Goodyear history caught by camera

THEY depict another era, when production at the iconic Wolverhampton Goodyear factory was underway but drawing to a halt.

These impressive images have been released by former worker Mike Pearce who began taking them whilst he was working as a key operator for the firm.

Mike, aged 57, of Heath Hayes, who was based at the Bushbury Lane site for 28 years when he worked for Goodyear, left the plant

at the end of October last year. Reflecting on his time there, the married father-of-two still feels that the images of Goodyear have some poignancy.

He said: "I think it was about 10 years before bosses announced that the plant would close that we all got a sense of foreboding, knowing that the job wouldn't last forever.

"So I started taking the photos of the site and looking at ways of making the plant immortalised in pictures.

"When they closed the tyre-making facil-

ity, I think that was really the point that it started to hit home to people and we had our own ways of documenting our time there.

"Spending 28 years working for the same company, you do develop strong relationships with the people you work with, and that's what I wanted to show in the photos - the strength of the factory and its importance in the city."

Mike took the photos and enhanced them in Photoshop to bring out certain colours, highlights and shadows.

He said: "I learned that professional photographers these days still enhance their photos like the old photographers used to do in the dark room.

"Back then, the technique was called 'dodge and burn' where the luminosity of a photo could be only manipulated by the length of the exposure.

"Now, there's a tool for that in Photoshop which makes it a lot easier, but the principle is the same. I think my Goodyear work is a lot more garish than the work I've done since. My

newer work is more subtle, but the Goodyear photos are still special to me."

Now, Mike, who has previously triumphed in several competitions, has developed his hobby of photography into a well-respected career.

The former secretary of Cannock Chase photographic society who has just re-started his membership after a three-year break, works for Webbs estate agents based in Cannock. He has used his skills to help sell an extra 35 houses a month.

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PAM AYRES HER TRUE FEELINGS

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The pub itself boasts a wide range of ciders, lagers, wines and spirits including four 'Real Ales' which they rotate weekly. Regulars very often enjoy ales such as Bathams, AJ Ales, Oakham, JHB, Stairway To Heaven and MA Pardoes Entire, plus many more!

The pub also run a loyalty scheme which means customers can get 10p back on their card for every pound they spend. A pub spokesman added: "With a juke box and free WIFI to compliment the regular entertainment every Friday, customers cannot ask for much more from a local pub!"

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Pam: My show's not just for old folk

Pam Ayres has been a writer, broadcaster, and entertainer for more than 40 years. She is one of the few authors who has had books in the Sunday Times bestseller charts in almost every decade since the 1970s. She is the author of several best-selling poetry collections, including *The Works*, *With These Hands*, *Surgically Enhanced* and *You Made Me Late Again!*.

And many of her poems are in school textbooks around the world including the UK, USA, China, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, South Africa, Ireland and Singapore.

In 2016, once again, the most borrowed poetry book in UK Libraries was Pam's most recent book, *You Made Me Late Again*. And this year she's back on the road with a new tour that reaches Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre on Saturday.

Pam is one of the most popular female comedians performing in UK theatres. Her autobiography, *The Necessary Aptitude*, was the UK's bestselling female autobiography of 2011, and her 2013 book of poetry, *You Made Me Late Again*, went straight into the Sunday Times bestseller lists.

ROYAL

She has appeared three times for HM The Queen – at the Silver Jubilee Royal Variety Performance in 1977, at a Royal Gala Charity Reception at St James Palace in 1996, when Pam, as the only entertainer, performed part of her solo stage show, and finally at Sandringham Women's Institute in 2004, when the Queen attended in her capacity as President of the Sandringham WI.

Subsequently, she was honoured to be awarded the MBE in Queen's Birthday Honours of 2004.

She is presently performing in more than 30 theatre and festival shows and is delighted to be back.

"I hope it will be fun. I'm on stage for two hours and I'll be using poems and stories and anecdotes and jokes. You have to vary it as much as you possibly can. I'll use old and new poems – things like *I Wish I'd Looked After My Teeth*.

"I'll use sad pieces too. We moved house after 28 years, which just about broke my heart, and I realise that's a commonly-shared feeling. There's also a piece about when children go to uni and the great gulf that leaves in your life.

"It's new and old. I always try and move it on all the time. I don't go round doing the same thing. I keep a very careful record of what I've said in a particular theatre. I try to write new material all the time and I've had a good writing period last winter."

There's no surefire way to write a brilliant new poem. Pam has to wait until the muse strikes and surf those creative ways.

"The process is waiting and praying for a good idea. That's the crux of it. It's to get a good idea that will strike a chord with lots of other people. Those things aren't that easy to find.

"I've been writing about long distance flying recently, that's come together quite well. It's looking for a good idea, then I work on it in the mornings. I go in each morning and work on the ideas I've got. I try to approach the subject from all sorts of different angles.

"A lot of my time is spent groping for good ideas. When I find one, I'm delighted. I try and do something good with it. You have to find something people will identify with."

Pam's a predominantly older audience but social media has allowed her to connect with a new generation. She is on Twitter and is constantly surprised about the new young people who come along.

"I do little political tweets and a bit of sniping from the sidelines, that's brought in quite an interesting new audience.

A way with words – Pam's tour reaches the Grand on Saturday



"It's not a show aimed at the old. I get three generations."

She is proud that performance poetry is now mainstream and feels a sense of kinship with new stars.

"I look now at the number of performance poets that there are and I do feel that it's partly down to me. Because I don't know of anybody except Cyril Fletcher who was doing his odd odes, sitting in an armchair and doing a bit of verse, who opened up the doors to it.

FLATTERING

"There was no-one going around with funny poems, using those as the main thrust of the evening. Phill Jupitus said to me 'you are the reason I'm a performance poet'. I didn't set out to be a performance poet. I wrote those things and if I'd been musical I'd have made them into funny songs. But I couldn't do that and everybody fell about laughing when I spoke them and that was good enough. I do feel a lot of people came after me, which is flattering."

Touring is bliss and she finds herself playing in Gibraltar, Althorp and Dubai, among other places. "You finish in all these amazing spots that you'd never in 100 years go to unless you did it for a living.

"I don't like the travel because the roads are busier but I love talking to an audience is great. I'm not as scared as I was at the beginning. If you are successful on a talent show these days you are thrown to enormous audiences before you're ready. Well, I'm not new but I still love it."

● For more entertainment news and reviews see **The Ticket** in your Express & Star every Friday.

*The show's full of
new and old. I try
and move it
on all the time*



Paul Bradley and Jessie Wallace



Soap stars head cast in classic spine-chiller

Former EastEnders stars Paul Bradley and Jessie Wallace head the cast in Ira Levin's classic thriller *Deathtrap* at the New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, next week.

Directed by Adam Penford, it runs from November 7 to 11.

BAFTA nominated actress Wallace, and Bradley, who is also well-known as Elliott Hope in *Holly City*, a role he played for 10 years, will be joined by Sam Phillips, Beverly Klein and Julien Ball.

One of the most successful plays in its genre, *Deathtrap* centres on Sidney Bruhl (Bradley), a once successful writer of stage thrillers, who is in the grip of chronic writer's block. Out of the blue, young playwright Clifford Anderson (Phillips) sends Bruhl one

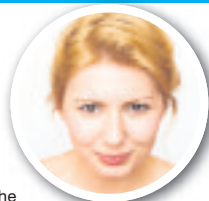
of the only two copies of his brilliant new whodunnit, *Deathtrap*. Desperate to set Broadway alight once more, Bruhl spies his chance to invite Clifford to his remote country home, bringing the only other copy of *Deathtrap* with him.

If Bruhl can kill the newcomer and pass the play off as his own, he could once again be the toast of Broadway.

A spine-chiller guaranteed to keep the audience on their edge of their seats, *Deathtrap* continues to hold the record as the longest running thriller in Broadway history. It was subsequently made into a hit film starring Michael Caine and Christopher Reeve.

Call 0844 871 3011 or visit www.atgtickets.com/birmingham

Beautiful story of Carole's rise to fame



A TALENT show finalist has the beautiful role of Carole King in a musical about the songwriter's life. *Beautiful – The Carole King Musical* is being staged at the Birmingham Hippodrome next week.

It stars Brontë Barbé, pictured, a finalist in Andrew Lloyd Webber's BBC1 series *Over The Rainbow* in 2010. She has since appeared on stage in both London's West End and around the UK and was last seen locally at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre as Princess Fiona

in *Shrek – The Musical*. She will be joined by Kane Oliver Parry as King's husband and songwriting partner Gerry Goffin, with Amy Ellen Richardson and Matthew Gonsalves as fellow songwriters Cynthia Weil, and Barry Mann. Life Without George star Carol Royle is King's mother Genie Klein and Adam Howden is publisher and producer Donnie Kirshner.

The Olivier, Tony and Grammy Award-winning West End and Broadway musical tells the inspiring true story of King's rise to stardom, from being part of a hit songwriting team with Goffin, to her relationship with Weil and Mann, to becoming

one of the most successful solo acts in popular music history.

Along the way, she wrote the best-selling album *Tapestry*, which featured the likes of (You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman and You've Got a Friend.

Other classics include It Might as Well Rain Until September and The Locomotion.

Showtimes are at 7.30pm, Tuesday to Saturday, with matinees on Wednesday and Thursday at 2pm and on Saturday at 2.30pm. Tickets are from £18. See bookings. birminghamhippodrome.com

Top acts appear in hair-raising festival

Big names appear in Wolverhampton as part of a comedy festival that will see more than 120 events staged across the city. Jimmy Carr is at the Civic tomorrow (Friday), prankster Lee Nelson is at the Wulfrun on the same night and the wacky Milton Jones, pictured, at the Civic the following night.



In Birmingham, Joe Brown is at Town Hall on Saturday, the same night Jamiroquai play at the Arena. ABC/Kid Creole perform at the Symphony Hall on Monday.

Strictly legal – and one Elle of a musical

EastEnders' Rita Simons, UK Eurovision entrant and former Coronation Street and Emmerdale actor Bill Ward star in a major new UK tour of *Legally Blonde – The Musical*, which runs at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton next week.

Centring on Elle Woods, who heads to Harvard Law School after her boyfriend dumps her for someone more serious, it runs from November 7 to 11. Press & PR manager Scott Bird said: "This is a hugely exciting cast to be presenting *Legally Blonde The Musical* at the Grand Theatre in the first professional production of the show to play here."

Showtimes are Tuesday-Thursday 7.30pm, Friday at 5pm and 8.30pm and Saturday at 2.30 and 7.30pm. For tickets from £19.50, with a £3 booking fee, call 01902 429212 or visit grandtheatre.co.uk

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CHOICE



Scott Bakula and Lucas Black

NCIS: New Orleans (Channel 5, 10pm) New series. The naval crime drama spin-off returns, picking up with Pride and his team in the wake of the departure of Meredith Brody, who left for good after a close call with a terrorist. Concerns are raised about whether the unit has been irreparably compromised, and FBI special agent Tammy Gregorio is assigned to discover the truth. However, the agents are quickly given a chance to prove their effectiveness, as they co-ordinate with various other federal agencies to track down a sniper targeting special events across New Orleans. Starring Scott Bakula, Lucas Black, Vanessa Ferlito, Rob Kerkovich, Daryl Mitchell, Shalita Grant, CCH Pounder, Derek Webster, Doris Morgado, Jared Day and Steven Weber.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Hairy Bikers' Comfort Food. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News. Weather. **1.15** Rugby League World Cup. **2.45** Film: Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted. (2012) Animated comedy, with the voice of Ben Stiller. **4.10** Final Score. **5.10** Len Goodman's Partners in Rhyme. **5.40** BBC News. **5.50** Regional Programme.

6.00 **Pointless Celebrities.** Lucy Porter, Rob Deering, Rachel and Stanley Johnson, John Shuttleworth, Dave Gorman, Carol McGiffin and Charlotte Crosby all take part in the unorthodox quiz show.

6.50 **Strictly Come Dancing.** The pressure for the pro-celebrity couples remains as high as ever, as the competition enters its seventh weekend. The 10 remaining duos once again take to the dance-floor to demonstrate whether another week of rigorous training has improved their footwork, while judges Shirley Hallas, Bruno Tonioli, Craig Revel Horwood and Darcey Bussell assess their performance. Each star will be hoping to claim a high score from the adjudicators, placing them in a better position to avoid facing a dreaded elimination dance-off following the public vote.

8.20 **Casualty.** New junior doctor Rash faces nightmare first day in the ED, and Lily must listen to either her head or her heart as she decides whether to take a research position in Hong Kong.

9.10 **Gunpowder.** Catesby and his gang load the tunnels below Parliament with gunpowder, but across the city, Father Garnet faces pressure to betray them to the authorities. Last in the series.

10.10 **BBC News.** Weather.; National Lottery Update.

10.30 **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including West Ham United v Liverpool.

11.50 **The NFL Show.** Mark Chapman is joined by former players Osi Umenyiora and Jason Bell to present highlights of Thursday night's game, plus a look at the major stories shaping the NFL.

12.20 **Film:** The Double. (2011) **1.55** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.00** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 How We Won the War. (R) **6.45** Animal Park Summer Special. (R) **7.30** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **8.00** Deadly 60. (R) **8.30** Live Rugby League World Cup. **11.30** Coast. (R) **12.00** Rick Stein's Long Weekends. (R) **1.00** Nigella: At My Table. (R) **1.30** Natural World. (R) **2.30** Escape to the Continent. (R) **3.30** Italy Unpacked. (R) **4.30** Mastermind. (R) **5.00** Flog It! (R)

6.00 **The Big Family Cooking Showdown.** The three most successful families return for the final, in which they prepare food for a big family get-together, including nibbles, main courses and desserts. Last in the series. (R)

7.00 **Britain Afloat.** Mary-Ann Ochota reveals how a recreational sport developed by fisherman working on the Mersey led to the creation of pleasure sailing, and the formation of exclusive sailing clubs.

7.30 **Front Row.** Giles Coren presents an Agatha Christie-themed edition of the cultural review show, featuring an interview with Murder on the Orient Express director and star Kenneth Branagh.

8.00 **Grand Tours of the Scottish Islands.** Paul Murton journeys around the coast of the Long Island of Harris and Lewis, beginning on Scarp, travelling north to Great Bernera, then south east to Scalpay. (R)

8.30 **Dad's Army.** The older members of the platoon take drastic action when they are threatened with being made air-raid wardens, transforming themselves in a bid to appear younger. (R)

9.00 **Josh Widdicombe: What Do I Do Now.** A recorded performance of the comedian's show at the Hammersmith Apollo, in which he vents his frustration at everything from an overflowing shower to his contactless debit card.

10.00 **QI XL.** With Aisling Bea, Joe Lycett and David Mitchell.

10.45 **Later – with Jools Holland.** Last in the series.

11.50 **Film: Red Tails.** (2012) Black US fighter pilots battle both the German air force and racism in their own ranks. Fact-based Second World War drama, starring Terrence Howard.

1.45 **Film:** Love. (2011) **3.05** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Mission Emplovable. (R) **7.05** Oddbods. (R) **7.10** Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Thunderbirds Are Go. **9.00** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Saturday Morning with James Martin. **11.25** Gino's Italian Coastal Escape. (R) **11.55** The Hungry Sailors. (R) **12.50** The Harbour. (R) **1.20** ITV News: Weather. **1.30** The X Factor Live. (R) **3.30** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **3.55** **Film:** Father of the Bride. (1991)

6.00 **Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs.** Paul meets a pair of old labradors who cannot bear to be apart for one second and a tiny puppy with an anti-social behaviour problem. (R)

6.25 **Regional Programme:** Weather.

6.35 **ITV News:** Weather.

6.50 **New You've Been Framed!** Harry Hill narrates another selection of hilarious home videos, including a toddler's explosive encounter with a cake, and a pole-dancer's disaster in a kitchen.

7.15 **Ninja Warrior UK.** Competitors from across the UK test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara. (R)

8.20 **The X Factor Live.** Dermot O'Leary hosts as the nerve-jangling live stage of the talent contest continues, and the remaining acts step on-stage to face scrutiny at the hands of the judges.

10.05 **The Jonathan Ross Show.** Actress and director Jodie Foster, comedian and bestselling author David Williams, and GameFace star Roisin Conaty join Jonathan for a chat, and Blondie perform in the studio.

11.10 **ITV News:** Weather.

11.25 **Film: Forgetting Sarah Marshall.** (2008) A jilted man takes a trip to Hawaii, only to find his ex and her new boyfriend are staying at the same resort. Romantic comedy, with Jason Segel and Kristen Bell.

1.20 Jackpot247. **3.00** The Hungry Sailors. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.25 Adventure Racing: Spartan Race Europe. **6.50** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.15** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.45** Frasier. (R) **8.10** Frasier. (R) **8.35** The Big Bang Theory. **9.00** The Big Bang Theory. **9.30** The Big Bang Theory. **9.55** The Simpsons. (R) **10.20** The Simpsons. (R) **10.50** The Simpsons. (R) **11.20** The Simpsons. (R) **11.50** Come Dine with Me. (R) **12.20** Come Dine with Me. (R) **12.50** Come Dine with Me. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **1.55** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** A Place in the Sun: Home or Away. (R) **3.30** A Place in the Sun: Home or Away. (R) **4.30** Best Laid Plans. **5.30** Location, Location, Location. (R)

6.30 **Channel 4 News.**

7.00 **Volatile Earth: Killer Volcanoes.** New series. The first of three documentaries in which scientists who are experts in the field of natural disasters identify the most extreme catastrophes to have ever occurred on Earth, piecing together the stories of these events via the debris left in their wake.

8.00 **Pearl Harbour: The New Evidence.** Documentary shedding light on whether there is any truth to conspiracy theorists' suggestions that London and Washington had been aware the Japanese were planning to assault the American naval base at Pearl Harbour in 1941, but refused to act on the intelligence as part of a plot to bring the full might of America's military into the Second World War. In the wake of the attack, an investigation into how US forces failed to anticipate the assault concluded that Admiral Husband Kimmel, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, had been guilty of dereliction of duty, a charge that left his career in tatters. (R)

9.00 **Film: The Other Woman.** (2014) A woman is devastated to learn her boyfriend is actually married, but when she meets his wife, they quickly become friends. When they discover he has a third secret lover, they decide to join forces and teach him a lesson. Comedy, starring Cameron Diaz.

11.10 **Film: Unknown.** (2011) Thriller, starring Liam Neeson.

1.15 The Last Leg SU2C Special. (R) **2.10** Holyoaks. **2.20** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.15** Kirstie's Vintage Home. (R) **5.35** Draw It! (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.15** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **9.50** The Gadget Show. (R) **10.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **11.45** Film: The 12 Gifts of Christmas. (2015) Comedy, starring Katrina Law. **1.25** **Film:** The Christmas Card. (2006) Romantic drama, with John Newton and Alice Evans. **3.10** **Film:** Christmas in the City. (2013) Drama, starring Ashley Williams. **4.10** 5 News Update. **4.15** **Film:** Christmas in the City. (2013) Concluded. **5.00** **Film:** A Mission for Christmas. (2015) Premiere. Christmas drama, starring Lindsey Gort. **6.00** 5 News Update. **6.05** **Film: A Mission for Christmas.** (2015) Concluded. **6.45** **Film: Rio Lobo.** (1970) A former Union Army colonel heads for Texas to recover a shipment of gold bullion stolen from a payroll train during the American Civil War and settle a few old scores along the way. Howard Hawks' Western, starring John Wayne, Jorge Rivera, Christopher Mitchum, Jack Elam, Jennifer O'Neill and Mike Henry. **8.55** 5 News Weekend. **9.00** **Football on 5: The Championship.** Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games, including Bristol City v Cardiff City at Ashton Gate, Brentford v Leeds United at Griffin Park, and Aston Villa v Sheffield Wednesday at Villa Park. **10.00** **NCIS: New Orleans.** New series. The naval crime drama spin-off returns, as Pride and company co-ordinate with other federal agencies to track down a sniper targeting special events across New Orleans. **10.55** **NCIS: New Orleans.** The FBI gets involved in an investigation into the murder of a US Navy officer, in which Pride's friend Elvis Bertrand, a US Navy intelligence analyst, is the prime suspect. **11.50** **Lip Sync Battle UK.** Melanie Brown and Professor Green present the musical game show as actor Danny Dyer and dancer Craig Revel Horwood go head to head lip-synching to a hit song. (R) **12.15** SuperCasino. Live interactive gaming. **3.10** The Yorkshire Vet. Peter Wright attends to a feisty Highland cow. (R) **4.00** Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild. (R) **4.50** Great Scientists. (R) **5.15** Wildlife SOS. (R) **5.40** Chinese Food in Minutes. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 The Inca: Masters of the Clouds **8.00** Gunpowder 5/11: The Greatest Terror Plot **9.00** I Know Who You Are **11.35** The Vietnam War **12.30** Top of the Pops: 1984 **1.55** Sound of Cinema: The Music That Made the Movies **2.55** The Inca: Masters of the Clouds **3.55** Close **ITV2**

12.20 Take Me Out **1.30** Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule **2.00** **Film:** See Spot Run (2001) **3.00** FYI Daily **3.05** **Film:** See Spot Run (2001) **4.05** **Film:** St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10** **Film:** St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **6.10** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **7.15** FYI Daily **7.20** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **10.00** Celebrity Juice **10.50** Family Guy **11.50** American Dad! **12.50** Timewasters **1.20** Bromans **2.20** Viral Tap **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3

11.05 **Film:** Rest in Peace, Mrs Columbo (1990) **1.05** Foyles War **3.10** Midsomer Murders **11.00** The Syndicate **12.05** Foyles War **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

11.25 Shed and Buried **1.30** ITV Racing Live from Ascot and Wetherby. Coverage of today's race meetings at Ascot and Wetherby. **4.00** Pawn Stars **4.55** Hornblower **7.00** Live World Series of Darts Finals. Coverage of day two from Glasgow. **11.00** **Film:** The Glimmer Man (1996) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10** **Film:** The Glimmer Man (1996) **12.50** The Sweeney **1.50** The Classic Car Show **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

11.30 **Film:** Toy Story OF TERROR! (2013) **12.00** How I Met Your Mother **1.00** The Goldbergs **3.00** Don't Tell the Bride **4.00** The Great British Bake Off: The Final 5 **5.15** The Great British Bake Off: An Extra Slice **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** **Film:** Iron Man 2 (2010) The hero battles a vengeful new foe, but finds the armour he created to fight evil is killing him. Adventure, with Robert Downey Jr. **11.25** Gogglebox **1.30** Naked Attraction **2.35** Rude Tube **3.25** Tattoo Fixers **4.20** How I Met Your Mother **5.05** Black-ish **Film4**

11.00 Bridge to Terabithia (2007) **1.00** Coneheads (1993) **2.40** Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules (2011) **4.45** Earthquake (1974) **7.10** Legend (1985) **9.00** 47 Ronin (2013) **11.15** The Transporter (2002) **1.00** Dog Soldiers (2002) **3.15** Close

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

NEWLY REFURBISHED PARK LANE TAVERN

They always say never judge a book by its cover so we decided to check out The Park Lane Tavern in Colley Gate, and I have to say what was on offer in there was a total surprise.



It serves a carvery option 7 days a week from midday which consists of a choice of 4 meats, turkey, beef, pork and gammon and accompanied by stuffing, Yorkshire puddings and up to 12 vegetables, topped off with what they call their 'secret recipe gravy' known also as what mother used to make! All this for just £4.99 for a lunchtime meal or £5.99 evenings and Saturdays and £7.99 for Sunday lunch represents extremely good value by today's standards.

They also don't forget their mini diners with 'Kids Eat Free' Monday to Saturday between 3pm and 6pm and during school holidays it's All Day Monday to Saturday.

But it doesn't stop there they also have a full main menu consisting of the classic pub favourites such as steaks, mixed grills, burgers and fish and chips, where the fish would not be out of place in any issue of 'Moby Dick'. To finish is there very tempting dessert menu, that's if you have room after the size of meals you get at The Park Lane Tavern.

Then if that's not enough choice for you you can also choose for the breakfast which is served Friday, Saturday and Sunday 08.30am until 11.00am. Their breakfast is a buffet style 'All you can eat' with enough choice to satisfy any diner from eggs 2 ways, bacon, sausage, mushrooms, baked beans, hash browns, black pudding, grilled fresh tomatoes, toast & fried bread. There's even



jam for your toast if you still not full after all that.

Half Price Monday

They also host special evenings like their 'Half Price Monday' which has proven to be very popular, and why not, already reasonably priced selected main meals off their main menu (which includes steaks) at half price served between 5pm and 8pm every Monday. Also their psychic evenings where for £15 you get a reading from a medium and a carvery, for those believers amongst you that must be a bargain.

You get a very friendly feeling when you enter The Park Lane Tavern and that's mostly down to the staff. Happy to see you and always keen to help. They have a lot of regular customers and it's been known for a customer's drink to be poured and waiting for them before they reach the bar, you don't see that at many places nowadays.

There are no airs or graces at The Park Lane Tavern, you get delicious food at great prices served by happy staff in a comfortable environment. No wonder this place has people returning time after time.

SUNDAY'S TV NOVEMBER 5

CHOICE



Indira Varma

Unspeakable (Channel 4, 9pm)
One-off drama, starring Indira Varma as a mother who receives an anonymous text message warning her that her 11-year-old daughter is being abused by her new boyfriend, who has only just moved in with her. Unable to share her fears with anyone else, she succumbs to paranoia over the course of a weekend. Luke Treadaway, Neil Maskell, Kate Ashfield, Will Thorp, Nina Sorrentino, Lucas Bond, Jordan Whyte, Anil Desai, Sophie Brooke, Alison Garner, Ffion Jolly, Lucinda Holloway and Abigail Wisdom also star.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Sunday Morning Live. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Points of View. **1.30** Lifeline. **1.45** FA Cup Final Score. **4.00** Songs of Praise. **4.35** Blue Planet II. (R) **5.35** BBC News. **5.50** Regional Programme.
6.00 **Panorama.** In-depth current affairs report.
6.30 **Countryfile.** Matt Baker reports on a new charter to protect Britain's woodlands and Ellie Harrison meets seal pups at Skomer in a special episode themed around Autumn.
7.15 **Strictly Come Dancing – The Results.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman reveal the results of last night's show before another couple leave the contest. Featuring a musical performance from Stereophonics.
8.00 **Blue Planet II.** Creatures that live in volcanic hot spots on the ocean bed, areas that reach temperatures hot enough to melt lead and which may hold the secrets behind all life on Earth. Other strange creatures from the depths of the sea include bone-eating worms, fish that walk rather than swim, and hordes of squid. Plus, footage of sharks in a feeding frenzy over the dead body of a whale and the wildlife of the Midnight Zone in the Pacific, an area that never receives any natural light, forcing creatures to rely on their own bioluminescence.
9.00 **The Last Post.** Joe's future in the army hangs in the balance, as Honor struggles with the revelations about his past. Markham is torn between his duty and his conscience. Last in the series.
10.00 BBC News.
10.20 Regional Programme.
10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action, including Chelsea v Manchester United a and Manchester City v Arsenal.
11.45 **Ronny Chieng: International Student.** New series. Sitcom starring the comedian as a Malaysian student who comes to an Australian university to study law. Ronnie enters a drinking contest to win access to a book.
12.15 Weather for the Week Ahead.
12.20 BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 How We Won the War. (R) **6.35** A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.20** Great British Garden Revival. (R) **8.20** The Countryfile Ramble for Children in Need. (R) **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Mary Berry's Foolproof Cooking. (R) **11.30** My Life on a Plate. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Natural World – Echo: The Unforgettable Elephant. (R) **2.00** Wild Brazil. (R) **3.00** Flog It! (R) **4.00** Rugby League World Cup. **5.30** MOTD: FA Cup Highlights.
7.00 **Top Gear.** Matt LeBlanc drives an eight-wheeled rescue vehicle from Russia. Rory Reid turns the world's ugliest car into a luxury yacht, and Chris Harris reviews the new Porsche Cayman. Jamiroqui frontman Jay Kay is the studio guest. Last in the series. (R)
8.00 **Robot Wars.** Dara O Briain and Angela Scanlon present the third round, with robots Apex, Vulture, Terrorhurtz, Track-Tion, Bucky the Robot and Rapid battling it out. Among the contestants controlling the machines are a group of schoolchildren who are this series' youngest entrants and a team that has spent more money on their robot than any of their rivals.
9.00 **Film: Louis Theroux: My Scientology Movie.** (2015) Premiere. The reporter investigates the controversial religious organisation, but finds himself denied access to anyone involved. Adopting a different approach, he resorts to recruiting actors to re-enact the personal stories of former members – only to find his project is under surveillance by representatives of the church.
10.35 **Snowfall.** Franklin causes trouble by bringing his drunken father to Jerome and Louie's July 4 barbecue. Teddy and Alejandro crash land in the Mexican desert while flying back from Nicaragua.
11.20 **Film: The Ring.** (2002) A journalist investigates teenage deaths linked to a videotape, which is rumoured to cause the demise of anyone who watches it. Horror remake, with Naomi Watts and Martin Henderson.
1.05 Sign Zone: Question Time. David Dimbleby chairs the topical debate in Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire, where panellists include former Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale and the Stagecoach founder Brian Souter. (R) **2.05** HOLBY City. (R) **3.05** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Mission: Emplovable. (R) **7.05** Oddbods. (R) **7.10** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Ben 10. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Make It Pop. (R) **8.00** Scrambled!: Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Australian Wilderness with Ray Mears. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** Film: Rest in Peace, Mrs Columbo. (1990) **1.00** ITV News: Weather. **1.10** The X Factor Live. (R) **2.50** Catchphrase. (R) **3.35** Ball and Boe: Back Together. (R) **4.35** A Very Royal Wedding. (R) **5.50** Regional Programme: Weather.
6.00 **ITV News: Weather.**
6.10 **The Chase: Celebrity Special.** Bradley Walsh presents as celebrity contestants Hannah Mills, Chris Ramsey, Dion Dublin and Lesley Garrett pit their wits against ruthless quiz genius the Chaser in the hope of winning a potential prize pot worth thousands of pounds. They must work as a team and play strategically to answer general knowledge questions against the clock and race down the game board to the exit without being caught.
7.05 **The X Factor Live.** Dermot O'Leary hosts the second of this weekend's two live shows, as the acts strive to ensure a place in next week's episodes – while judges Simon Cowell, Sharon Osbourne, Nicole Scherzinger and Louis Walsh will be hoping to ensure their favoured acts make it through to the next stage.
9.00 **Sheridan.** Sheridan Smith performs songs from her debut album as well as other favourite numbers, accompanied by a live orchestra. In between musical numbers, she chats to Alexander Armstrong about her career.
10.00 **ITV News: Weather.**
10.20 Peston on Sunday. (R)
11.15 **Car Crash Britain: Caught on Camera.** Documentary focusing on crashes, miracle escapes and bad driving, with stories including a daughter's tribute to her dad's life-saving driving skills. (R)
12.10 Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.00 Kevin Can Wait. **6.25** Kevin Can Wait. **6.50** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.15** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.05** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **3.00** The Simpsons. (R) **3.30** The Great British Bake Off: The Final. (R) **4.45** Channel 4 News. **5.15** Film: Paddington. (2014) Family comedy, starring Hugh Bonneville.
7.00 **Escape.** Five engineers are stranded in Arctic conditions and must assemble a vehicle to escape in from the wreckage of a snowmobile and a light aircraft. The team combines skills ranging from aircraft mechanics to vehicle engineering – but struggle to agree on exactly what they should be building. With Matt Middleton.
8.00 **Great Canal Journeys.** Timothy West and Prunella Scales explore the Marne-Rhine Canal in Alsace and Lorraine, close to France's border with Germany and running through forests, mountains and valleys. They get to grips with an unfamiliar system of locks, sample local wines, and pay a visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.
9.00 **Unspeakable.** One-off drama, starring Indira Varma as a mother who receives an anonymous text message warning her that her 11-year-old daughter is being abused by her new boyfriend, who has only just moved in with her. Unable to share her fears with anyone else, she succumbs to paranoia over the course of a weekend.
10.00 **Gogglebox: Celebrity Special for SUZC.** Critiques of popular and topical TV shows, featuring some well-known faces appearing in support of the Stand Up to Cancer initiative. (R)
11.00 **Film: The Railway Man.** (2013) The wife of a former prisoner of war tries to learn the truth about the traumatic events that haunt her husband. Fact-based drama, with Colin Firth and Nicole Kidman.
1.05 The Supertv. (R) **2.00** A Summer to Save My Life. (R) **2.55** Gillette World Sport. **3.20** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **3.45** Mobil 1 The Grid. (R) **4.15** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.10** Draw It! (R) **5.35** Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.20** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.35** Wisper. (R) **6.40** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.45** Milkshake! Bopping About. (R) **6.50** Simon. (R) **7.00** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.05** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Bob the Builder. (R) **7.30** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.45** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.50** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.15** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.30** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.50** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.30** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.50** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.25** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.20** Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud 3. (R) **11.45** Film: A Husband for Christmas. (2016) **1.30** Film: Coming Home for Christmas. (2013) Premiere. Drama, starring Carly and Britt McKillip. **3.10** Film: Let It Snow. (2013) Premiere. Drama, starring Candace Cameron Bure. **4.10** 5 News Update. **4.15** Film: Let It Snow. (2013) **4.55** 5 News Weekend. **5.00** Film: Grease. (1978)
6.00 5 News Update.
6.05 Film: Grease. (1978) Concluded.
7.15 **Grease: Before & After They Were Stars.** The stories of the cast of Grease, from their careers before the movie to their lives afterwards.
8.15 **Rugby on 5: Anglo Welsh Cup Highlights.** Action from the matchday one pool fixtures in the domestic rugby union competition, which included Exeter Chiefs v Northampton Saints, Saracens v Harlequins and London Irish v Bath.
9.00 **The Grease Story.** The story behind the classic movie musical. The programme examines the original stage musical in the early 1970s, which starred a young Richard Gere, and at the changes that occurred between stage and screen, including the addition of several new songs and toning down the original show's darker elements.
10.30 **Most Shocking Moments in Pop.** A countdown of outrageous events and scandals from pop world, including Miley Cyrus's performance at 2013 VMAs and Britney Spears shaving her head. (R)
1.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.00** Inside Britain's Biggest Mosque. (R) **4.50** Great Artists. (R) **5.15** Wildlife SOS. (R) **5.45** Chinese Food in Minutes. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Film: October: 10 Days That Shook the World (1928) **9.40** Ceremony: Return of Friedrich Engels **10.40** The Space: Parade **11.10** Film: Gulag (1985) **2.10** Russia – A Century of Suspicion: A Timewatch Guide **3.10** Close
ITV2
11.05 2Awesome: Third Wheel **11.25** The X Factor Live **1.10** You've Been Framed! Gold **1.45** Film: Bean (1997) **2.50** FYI Daily **2.55** Film: Bean (1997) **3.30** Film: Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **4.30** FYI Daily **4.35** Film: Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **5.20** Film: Clash of the Titans (2010) **6.20** FYI Daily **6.25** Film: Clash of the Titans (2010) **7.25** Film: Pacific Rim (2013) **8.25** FYI Daily **8.30** Film: Pacific Rim (2013) **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30** Release the Hounds: Halloween Special **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV3
12.55 Heidi **3.05** Film: Carry On Follow That Camel (1967) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10** Film: Carry On Follow That Camel (1967) **5.00** Lewis **9.00** The Syndicate **10.05** Honest **11.10** Film: The Constant Gardener (2005) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25** Film: The Constant Gardener (2005) **1.40** The Knock **2.35** Mr Selfridge **3.25** Wycliffe **5.15** Judge Judy **5.35** ITV3 Nightscreen
ITV4
12.45 Live World Series of Darts Finals. Coverage of the quarter-finals from Glasgow. **5.00** Pawn Stars **6.50** Snooker v Darts **7.00** Live World Series of Darts Finals. Coverage of the semi-finals and final from Glasgow. **11.00** Film: 6 Bullets (2012) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10** Film: 6 Bullets (2012) **1.15** The Sweeney **2.15** Storage Wars **2.35** British Touring Cars – Crashes and Smashes **4.55** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
EA
11.00 Made in Chelsea **12.00** Don't Tell the Bride **1.00** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Big Bang Theory **3.30** Film: Johnny English Reborn (2011) **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: Battle: Los Angeles (2011) **11.20** Naked Attraction **12.25** Tattoo Fixers **1.30** Rude Tube **2.35** First Dates **3.25** Hollyoaks
Film4
11.00 Vice Versa (1988) **1.00** Anna Karenina (2012) **3.45** Short Circuit 2 (1988) **6.05** The Hunger Games (2012) **9.00** American Ultra (2015) **10.50** Transporter 2 (2005) **12.30** Hitchcock (2012) **2.25** Black Rock (2012)



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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Mommy, Channel 4, 1.50am
A widow decides to take her violent teenage son out of the institution that has been his home for the past three years. However, his behaviour begins to spiral out of control, and she is forced to turn to a mysterious new neighbour for help. Drama, starring Anne Dorval and Antoine-Olivier Pilon. (2014)

TUESDAY
I'm Not Ready for Christmas, Channel 5, 3.15pm
When a compulsive fibber's niece makes a wish to Santa Claus, her world is turned upside down when it comes true and she is rendered incapable of lying. As her career and love life are jeopardised by her newfound honesty, she must learn to judge between telling the truth and doing what is right. Festive comedy, starring Alicia Witt and George Stults. (2015)

WEDNESDAY
Easy Virtue, BBC2, 12pm
A naive Englishman in the 1920s embarks on a passionate romance with a glamorous and sophisticated American while in the south of France, resulting in a hasty wedding. Romantic comedy based on Noel Coward's play, starring Jessica Biel, Ben Barnes, Kristin Scott Thomas and Colin Firth. (2008)



THURSDAY
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, BBC2, 12pm
A bumbling dreamer retreats into a fantasy world to escape grim reality, until an encounter with a mysterious woman sweeps him up into a real-life adventure. Comedy based on James Thurber's short story, starring Danny Kaye and Virginia Mayo. (1947)

FRIDAY
On the Waterfront, BBC2, 12pm
A former prizefighter is reduced to completing errands for the gangsters running the dockyard unions. When he witnesses his boss's thugs commit murder, he is willing to keep his mouth shut – until his conscience is pricked by an outspoken priest and the dead man's sister, who hope to persuade him to testify against the crooks. Elia Kazan's Oscar-winning drama, starring Marlon Brando, Lee J Cobb and Eva Marie Saint (1954)

Carol Vorderman pays tribute to inspiring people

The Pride of Britain Awards remind us of the courage which still exists in every corner of the land said Prince Charles – and with that simple statement, he sums up the purpose of this annual event.

The ceremony started life in 1999 with the express intention to celebrate acts of bravery and selflessness from people whose actions would otherwise go unsung; these are ordinary folk with extraordinary stories.

Unfortunately, we're living in troubled times, which means that more such acts seem to have occurred this year than ever before – no doubt those sitting on the panel that decides who receives the trophies in each category have faced a tough time trying to work it all out.

But what each winner and nominee has in common is the fact that they did what they did while expecting nothing for it in return. In fact, they would probably claim they simply carried out a deed that anybody else would have done had they been in the same position.

Those receiving nominations have had their names put forward by members of the public, with the likes of former winner Katie Piper, Good Morning hosts Susannah Field and Ben Shephard, and Gressida Dick, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, sitting on a panel to decide who wins what – and there won't be a dry eye anywhere as the results are made public.

As for the famous faces taking part, well, there will be lots of them keen to show their appreciation.

We don't see that much of Carol Vorderman on the box these days, but she's hosted every Pride of Britain ceremony to date and she will be taking charge of this one too, which takes place at London's Grosvenor House.

Others set to participate include David Beckham, Simon Cowell, Michael Caine, Rod Stewart, Lenny Henry and Liam Payne, while politics will be represented by Prime Minister Theresa May and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn; scientist extraordinaire Stephen Hawking is also expected to feature.

"I'm always delighted to take part in the Pride of Britain Awards," says Beckham. "The winners are always amazing, particularly the children. I think the bravery and courage they show is an example to us all."

"I have been to some awards in my time, but never to an awards like this," adds Caine. "It is the most extraordinary thing."

"There's too much celebrity culture in this country," claims Henry. "Pride of Britain is great because it celebrates people who aren't part of that world."

Among those to look out for are the members of the emergency services and NHS who assisted those affected by the terror attacks in Manchester and London, as well as the Grenfell Tower disaster.

Other winners include a quick-thinking four-year-old who saved her mum's life and a hairdresser whose story has inspired domestic violence victims to fight back.

Ashley Banjo acts as a roving reporter, speaking to winners and celebrities backstage.



Carol Vorderman hosts The Pride of Britain Awards, Tuesday, ITV, 8pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Nigella: At My Table, BBC2, 8.30pm
Nigella Lawson serves up five more easy-to-make dishes, recipes that combine the comfort of the familiar and the exuberance of the new, rustling up her favourite weekend breakfast special in the shape of waffles. She also prepares dishes perfect for laidback entertaining in beef and aubergine fatteh, accompanied by Bulgur wheat with flaked almonds and nigella seeds, followed by her passion fruit ice-cream cake. Late-night inspiration comes in the form of a toasted brie, Parma ham and fig sandwich.

TUESDAY
The A Word, BBC1, 9pm
Return of the drama about an autistic child and his family. Two years on, in the Lake District, seven-year-old Joe is growing up. He has started to notice he's different from other kids. And when he says the word 'autistic' out loud, seeing it as something bad, Alison and Paul know they must talk to their son. But how do they broach the A word with a child for whom language is already a struggle? And how do they respond to the news that Joe is struggling at school more than they thought? Drama, starring Morven Christie, Lee Ingleby and Christopher Eccleston.

Motherland, BBC2, 10pm
Any sitcom in which Graham Linehan is involved will always be worth a watch. But when you add into the mix his wife Helen, Sharon Horgan and Holly Walsh as co-writers, then it becomes a must. Although Motherhood is a far cry from his most famous project, Father Ted, it went down a treat with viewers and critics alike when the pilot episode aired as part of the BBC's landmark sitcoms season last year. Heading the cast is Anna Maxwell-Martin, who clearly enjoys ditching her usual deadly serious roles for something far more light-hearted. She plays stressed-out mum Julia who, in the opening episode, is forced out of her comfort zone when she makes the mistake of agreeing to host a children's party.

WEDNESDAY
Big Life Fix: Children in Need Special, BBC2, 9pm
Eight-year-old Josh from London has a rare condition that means he was born completely blind and is unable to use his school's playground. Ayala, also eight, has cerebral palsy which has severely restricted her

movements and makes it difficult for her to play with her twin sister, while 10-year-old Aman was left with severe brain damage following a car accident that has affected her memory, leaving her struggling to remember the teacher's instructions. Now, Simon Reeve is following some of the UK's leading designers and engineers as they attempt to help these three remarkable children with bright ideas ranging from a tactile 'yellow brick road' to a programme that transcribes a teacher's spoken words into text.



Nigella: At My Table, Monday, BBC2, 8.30pm

THURSDAY
Sam Smith at the BBC, BBC1, 8pm
In the space of five short years, Sam Smith has gone from struggling singer and chorister to one of the world's biggest pop stars. Ever since he featured on

Disclosure's breakthrough single Latch in 2012, Smith's rise to the top of the music tree has been phenomenal. Last week, he released his eagerly awaited second album, The Thrill of It All, the follow-up to his multi-platinum selling debut, In The Lonely Hour. To celebrate, Smith has recorded this hour-long entertainment show in which he is accompanied by his band and the BBC Concert Orchestra to perform old and new tracks in front of a live studio audience. Presented by Fearne Cotton, the programme will also feature an interview with the singer as he discusses his career, music, and his much talked-about private life.

FRIDAY
Live International Football, ITV, 7.30pm
England v Germany (Kick-off 8.00pm). Mark Pougatch presents all the action from the friendly at Wembley Stadium, as the hosts begin preparations for the World Cup against the holders. The sides last met seven months ago in a friendly in Dortmund, when Lukas Podolski's goal in his final international gave Germany a 1-0 win despite an encouraging performance by Gareth Southgate's men. Joachim Low's side also prevailed by the same scoreline when they nations last faced each other at this venue in 2013.

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Simply complete the form below and send it with your payment to: **Personal Christmas Letters, PO Box 153, Bourne PE10 1BE.** Remember to enclose your payment of just **£4.99** per child that you are ordering for. Payments can be made by cheque or postal order.

Alternatively we have more pack options to buy online at www.personalchristmasletters.co.uk. Please email info@personalchristmasletters.co.uk if you need further advice.

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All orders received on or before the 26 November will be sent out on 27 November. All orders thereafter will be posted within 48 hours of receipt, until the closing date of 18 December. Delivery may vary.

Letters from Father Christmas
Please make your cheque payable to: **Personal Christmas Letters** and send your order to: **Personal Christmas Letters, PO Box 153, Bourne PE10 1BE.** (Please complete in CAPS)

Child's name: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____
Parent's name: _____

Phone / Email (should we need to contact you): _____
REF: **EXP17** please tickbox order on a separate sheet if required.

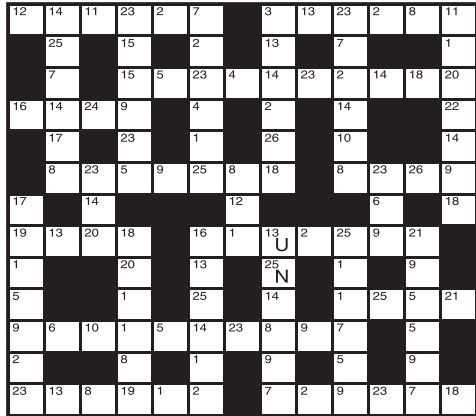
The publishers of this newspaper only collect your advertising-related offers and correspondence. If you do not wish to receive this information please tick ☐ If you do not wish to receive our further information from Personal Christmas Letters please tick ☐

BRAIN GYM

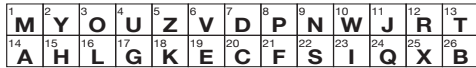
No.454

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

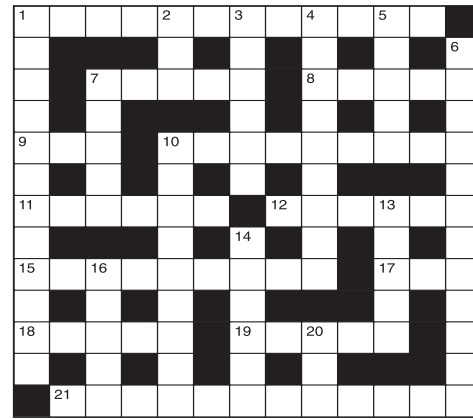
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Demobbed and not working (3,2,7)
- Took the part of another (5)
- Risk having a dog at home (5)
- America gets a point advantage (3)
- Changed circumstances may put a different complexion on it (9)
- Depart agitatedly, it may explode! (6)
- A sign of twins (5)
- They give actors difficulty - what a shame! (4,5)
- Sounds like a shortage of resin (3)
- Divert and employ after morning (5)
- Key material for piano-makers (5)
- Eminent composer? (6,2,4)

Down

- What the crafty bounder kept? (3,4,5)
- Had a meal in the cafe dining room (3)
- Win, possibly earned (6)
- Utterly incompetent (9)
- Hiding place many yearn to find (5)
- Open anger - by gum! (12)
- These could be on the bed (5)
- Waits for Noel (9)
- Insert in song (5)
- Officer found on the staff? (6)
- Instigate quarrels we hear (5)
- It just isn't on for cricketers (3)



Quick Clues:

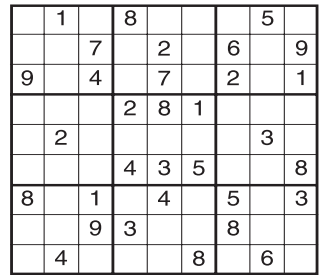
Across

- Immediately (8,4)
- Dilate (5)
- Smarten (5)
- Bind (3)
- Multiply (9)
- Choice (6)
- Clear (6)
- Uplifting (9)
- Curve (3)
- Sphere (5)
- Harbour (5)
- Avowal (12)

Down

- Faults (12)
- Wrath (3)
- Empty (6)
- Attractive (9)
- Ring (5)
- Ban (12)
- Sugary (5)
- Conspicuous (9)
- Obvious (5)
- Spectacles (6)
- Animal track (5)
- By way of (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:



LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Compact; 8 Prunes; 9 Teasing; 10 Dipole; 11 Spring; 12 Resettle; 18 Restroom; 20 Patron; 21 Poster; 22 Airmail; 23 Taunts; 24 Leashed. Down: 1 Spiders; 2 Purpose; 3 Pellet; 5 Oversees; 6 Posers; 7 Canine; 13 Turnpike; 14 Portend; 15 Impress; 16 Valise; 17 Cramps; 19 Thomas.
QUICK - Across: 4 Proceed; 8 Roamed; 9 Charity; 10 Mutter; 11 Allure; 12 Cavalier; 18 Pretence; 20 Winner; 21 Regard; 22 Appear; 23 Vision; 24 Meeting. Down: 1 Grimace; 2 Captive; 3 Reveal; 5 Rehearse; 6 Circle; 7 Entire; 13 Imprison; 14 Invalid; 15 Leading; 16 Simple; 17 Invent; 19 Thesis.

Quiz

- On which animal does Britain's largest flea primarily live?
- Which Welsh buccaneer became deputy-governor of Jamaica?
- In which country is Norilsk, the world's most northerly industrial city?
- Which evangelical movement was founded by John Wesley in 1739?
- Who is the central character of Homer's Iliad?
- What is the capital of Bermuda?
- What is a chow chow?
- Which sport was invented by Dr James Naismith in 1891?
- What was the subject of the Surgeon's Photograph of 1934?
- Of what is eugenics the study?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Sulphuric; 2 Dijon; 3 Eucalyptus; 4 Sergei Eisenstein; 5 Tony McCoy; 6 Four; 7 Heavy water; 8 Chile; 9 Seven; 10 Louvre.

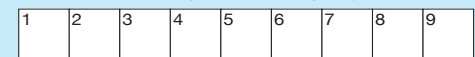
Niner: LABYRINTH

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

74853
1896392
8789

gives a London district,
gives a second London district,
gives a London gallery.



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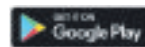
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FANCY a trip out to the countryside for some wholesome pub grub, great service and family-friendly atmosphere? If the answer is yes, you really ought to try out the Hinksford Arms.

The huge beer garden, vast selection of drinks and reasonably-priced menu should be enough to entice a family out to the greener side of Kingswinford. And when your 10oz rib eye steak is cooked to perfection too, it really does tick all the boxes.

Although we live around five miles from the pub, we hadn't realised it was there until a colleague mentioned it was definitely somewhere to try out.

We certainly thanked her for the recommendation because our visit to the venue in Swindon Road really was a lovely way to spend a Saturday evening in the autumn sunshine.

MUSIC

Sitting outside enjoying what I suppose you'd call an Indian Summer, our daughter, Annabelle, aged three, was able to blow off some steam on the wooden climbing frame, which sits in the middle of a huge, grassy beer garden.

One word of warning, if you're planning on eating later than 6pm when live music is on, it's probably best to check when food is being served until as they sometimes close that room early.

Once inside we were handed the menus by a friendly waitress, who really went out of her way to cater for us, ordered another drink and had a look at what to order. It was the classic pub menu so we knew exactly what to expect really, which is sometimes really refreshing.

For starters my wife Kelly went for the stuffed flat mushrooms, which came with either bacon and Stilton or tomato and brie – she went for the first option – and

Start up – pâté of the day served with rustic bread



I choose pâté of the day, which was served with rustic bread. There was certainly plenty to share between two adults and a small child

When it came to the mains, unfortunately the salmon was off the menu, which Kelly had her heart set on, but she was still happy to try the pork medallion stack with black pudding, which came served in a wholegrain apple sauce with mashed potato and seasonal vegetables.

That, in turn, stumped me a little because I had my heart set on that but thought it would be worth

trying two different meals at the very least, so played it safe and went for the rib eye steak. The fresh, home-cooked food is served all day every day, whether it's a quick lunch or a family meal, but all the pub classics, sandwiches, ciabatta and food from the grill is all cooked to order, which keeps it nice and fresh.

The main reason my eye was drawn to the steak was probably because on our actual anniversary a few days before while living it up in Rhyl, I had ordered a one and it had been served completely over-cooked and the meat was also tough.

Pub hub – The Hinksford Arms in Swindon



I ordered the steak medium rare and it was served perfectly. Kelly was delighted with her main too, with the pork also tender, the black pudding tasty and a little spicy, the mash smooth and creamy, and the wholegrain apple sauce rich and tangy.

Annabelle went for her usual option, tubes of pasta covered in a nice, tangy tomato sauce, served with two warm pieces of garlic bread. She enjoyed every bit and still had room for a children's strawberry ice cream, which we all ended up sharing as we were pretty full by then.

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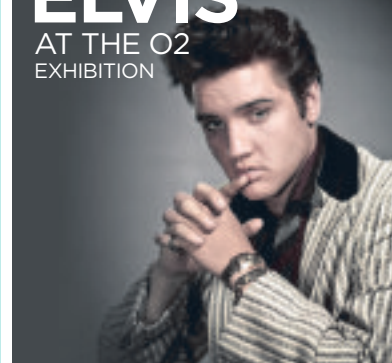
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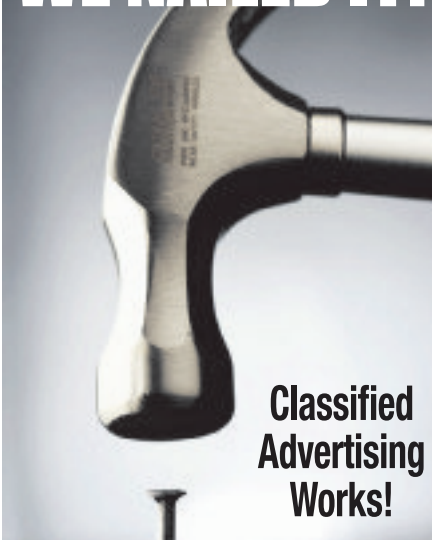
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Classified Ads

Stonic fills little SUV role with style

By Ian Donaldson

Nobody needs a watch the size of a coffee cup's saucer or a handbag you'd have trouble checking in as Ryanair cabin baggage, but lots of people want both of them – although probably not the same people.

And nobody really needs a smallish car that looks as though it could wade streams and shrug off life in the depth of a forest, even if it would drown with the first challenge and pine for its mummy on the other.

No, people want a small SUV because they think it looks good. Not for them the dull practicality of a mere hatchback; not when they want to be seen as adventurous types who stand out from the crowd.

And just at the moment the world can't make enough small SUVs. Sales in Europe alone are expected to double to more than two million annually in the four years leading to 2020.

And these are cars with buyers driven by desire, not bargain hunters desperate for a discount.

It means they'll happily pay a premium for the car of their dreams. And that makes the car manufacturers anxious to provide them with something to buy...

Enter the Kia Stonic, the South Korean car maker's first entry to the small SUV segment and a new baby sibling to the firm's biggest seller by far in the UK, the Sportage. The name is a mix of 'speedy' and 'tonic', if you were wondering.

Based on the new Rio small hatchback and built alongside it in Korea, the Stonic is offered in a smaller number of versions and aimed

at buyers with a bit more to spend – there's a premium of around £2,000 if you choose Stonic over Rio.

For the extra cash you'll have a car that is a bit longer and wider than the Rio (now 4,140mm and 1,760mm respectively) but, crucially, 70mm taller and with a bit more ground clearance thrown in too. It means a car that fills its little-SUV role with style, even if there is no 4x4 version because hardly anyone would buy it.

Personalise

Instead, there's a car that gives a buyer the chance to personalise their purchase with two-tone paint, picking out roof, door mirror casings and spoiler in contrasting colours, and choice of a pair of trim levels.

You will also find a dashboard that borrows heavily from the Rio, so it's crisply finished, logically set out and very easy to read but a bit dull and black.

The top version is lightened a little by splashes of add-on colour, but the interior remains more practical (and reasonably roomy front and rear and in the boot) than inspiring.

Kicking off the Stonic range is the £16,295 car in '2' grade with a 1.4 litre 98bhp petrol engine. It will reach 107mph, hit 62mph in 12.2 seconds and travel 51.4 miles on a gallon in the official test, while putting out 125g/km of CO2 in the process. It is expected to be a modest seller, despite a kit count that includes 17ins alloy wheels, air conditioning, all-round electric windows, Bluetooth with voice recognition, rear parking sensors and a six-speaker sound system with steering wheel mounted controls.



Based on the new Rio hatchback and built alongside it in Korea, the Stonic is offered in a smaller number of versions

The First Edition Stonics, from £19,695, add two-tone paint with a contrasting roof, smart key entry, auto air con, heated front seats and steering wheel and splashes of chrome on window trim and door handles.

Next engine up is a three-cylinder turbocharged petrol unit with 118bhp and a 115mph top speed and 9.9 seconds to 62mph time, backed up with 56.5mpg and 115g/km in the official tests. It costs £16,995 and the £700 premium over the entry-level car makes it look the bargain of the bunch.

Out on a varied test route it delighted with sharp steering and a well controlled ride once out of town, where it turns a bit too firm, to produce a car that made you want to keep on driving, enjoying a snick-snack gear change along the way.

A dash readout of 45.2mpg cemented the impression of a car that punches above its weight.

For another £800 you can move to a 1.6 litre 108bhp diesel, offering 112mpg/10.9 seconds and 67.3mpg and 109g/km.

Driving the same test route saw 53.9mpg at journey's end – an expected economy boost from the diesel power unit but in a car that felt heavier and much less inclined to enjoy itself.

In either car you can tell the Kia Stonic (designed mostly in Europe) was also honed on roads in the same part of the world and for drivers who value driving enjoyment a bit more highly than soggy-sprunged comfort.

And quite right too.



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VAUXHALL

Kodiaq is well up to the challenge

By Carmel Stewart

The Kodiaq SUV has the task of breaking new ground in the ever-expanding, highly competitive SUV market as Skoda's first ever seven-seater. And it is well up to the challenge.

As we have come to expect from Skoda, it covers pretty well all bases when it comes to choice – five engines (three petrol; two diesel), five trims, 2WD, 4WD, manual or DSG automatic transmissions and five or seven seats. Those two additional seats are standard in SE L trim and above and can be folded down into the floor when not in use.

The long wheelbase and short overhangs of the Kodiaq allow for a reasonable amount of interior space and, although the middle row of seats can slide and fold, there is a high transmission tunnel which means piggy-in-the-middle will have to share foot space with those on either side.

In addition, the rear two seats are really only suitable for smaller members of the family, or for the school-run.

For a size comparison in the Skoda range, the Kodiaq is slightly longer than the Octavia, while in the SUV segment as a whole, it sits between the Hyundai Santa Fe and the Kia Sorento.

The most economical of the engines tested was the robust 150ps 2.0litre diesel linked to the seven-speed DSG transmission which clocked an official average of 56.5mpg. Average economy of the smaller 1.4litre 150ps petrol unit was a touch under 40mpg and offers a nimble, composed and enjoyable drive. Well matched to the six-speed DSG, it tackled the steepest of inclines with ease.



Ultra-modern connectivity is a high priority in the car



Two extra seats in SE L trim can be folded into the floor



The long wheelbase and short overhangs of the Kodiaq allow for a reasonable amount of interior space

Choice will come down to usage. For those who put in the miles and expect the Kodiaq to earn its keep, clearly the diesel will tick all the boxes.

For school runs and city centre commutes, the petrol will more than suffice.

Options well worth considering include the Drive Mode Select which allows the driver to

adjust the engine management, gearing ratio and power steering input to suit varying road conditions.

Ultra-modern connectivity, while not on everyone's list, has been given a high priority in the Kodiaq, with the inclusion of the Skoda Connect online service which integrates all the traffic flow, Google Earth, fuel stops,

parking info and the like, as well as an automatic emergency call in the event of an accident. In addition, a very useful app alerts the owner to any unauthorised movement of the car.

Fun stuff to look for as you check out the trim levels include umbrellas in the door panels, ice scraper on the fuel cap, foot-

activated power tailgate and rechargeable torch.

The Kodiaq range has a starting price of £22,190 for the S trim, five-seat, 1.4 litre 125ps manual petrol rising to £36,135 for the top spec seven-seat Edition, powered by the 2.0 litre 190ps diesel, 4x4 with the DSG transmission.

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New compact SUV from MG is in showrooms now

With sales of compact-SUV and small crossovers continuing to grow across Europe, up 10 per cent in the first half of 2017, MG Motor UK has increased its offering in the market with its all-new MG ZS. A global car which has been re-engineered specifically for the UK audience, the MG ZS demonstrates MG's continued commitment to design excellence, engineering innovation and affordable style.

Available from UK dealers now, the MG ZS has already attracted significant attention since it was officially unveiled at the London Motor Show earlier this year. The intervening six months has seen thousands of people register their interest in the car, with dealers expecting this to translate to record sales figures.

With the entry-level model available on the road from just £12,495 the MG ZS also launches with a host of competitive finance offers.

Coming with one of the longest fully transferable warranties in its class, the MG ZS offers a seven year/80,000-mile warranty as standard across all variants, testament to MG's confidence in all-round quality.

The MG ZS is a global car with a distinct British feel. Completely re-engineered by the UK engineering team, this MG ZS has been tested on UK roads and developed for UK drivers. As such, the Excite and Exclusive models come with three power-assisted steering modes – Urban, Normal and Dynamic – which are designed to give the driver complete control over their ride. The MG ZS comes with most of the 'extras' as standard. An



The MG ZS is a global car with a distinct British feel

industry-leading 8" touch sensitive infotainment screen is supported by DAB radio (on the Exclusive and Excite models), while Bluetooth hands-free and remote central locking is available across the range. Cruise control is also included, while air conditioning comes as standard on Excite and Exclusive models, and Satellite Navigation and a rear camera are standard on the Exclusive variant. MG also offers Apple CarPlay on the MG ZS Excite and Exclusive variants at no extra cost.

With one of the most generous shoulder, leg and headroom capacities in its segment, the MG ZS offers a premium travelling experience for driver and passenger alike. 448 litres of boot capacity (60 litres larger than the typical compact-SUV) – plus a split-level boot – provides plenty of room. Customers can choose from a 1.5

DOHC VTI-tech, four-cylinder engine with smooth and responsive five-speed manual gearbox, or a 1.0 GDI turbocharged, three-cylinder version of the engine which complements the six-speed automatic gearbox option to produce a fast-paced and dynamic ride for drivers looking to experience a little extra.

With a larger fuel tank than the equivalent Nissan Juke, the MG ZS offers increased range, less need to fill the tank, lower CO2 emissions and an improved performance – with the MG ZS delivering 1-100kph in 10.9 seconds, compared to 12.0 seconds for its rival.

Having been tested to extremes in Sweden at minus 35 degrees Celsius, Spain at 42 degrees Celsius, Austria at exceptionally high altitudes and Wales in the typical British drizzle, MG is confident its Compact-SUV can stand up to any challenge.



Race aces Sam Gwilt, Owen Brown and Liam Harthill on the podium



Sam Gwilt lands a telling blow in his bout with Martin Sammon



Priory Park's Tyriq Allison, left, in action against Olympic's Brian O'Shea



Lords of the ring – Priory Park boxers ready for their contest with Ireland's Olympic BC

Priory are a big hit in and out the ring

PRIORY Park Boxing Club are warming up for their next venture following a successful debut on the international stage. The Dudley-based outfit hosted an England versus Ireland clash at The Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill that saw the club's boxers take on fighters from the renowned Olympic Boxing Club in Galway.

And the event proved to be a huge hit inside and outside the ring much to the delight of chairman Paul Gough. The night served up a series of high-quality contests in front of a crowd of around 300 with the hosts emerging victorious thanks to victories from Ben Collins, Connor Jones, Jarrod Grant, Tyriq Allison, Tomas Grygkiewicz and Sam Gwilt.

But as well as gaining plaudits for their efforts in the ring, Gough has been delighted with the feedback from the Irish visitors regarding the hospitality on display.

Gough left no stone unturned in his bid to ensure the Olympic contingent enjoyed their stay in the Black Country with a Go Karting night getting the boxers revved up for action. "It was one

of the biggest events we have put on as a club, we had never staged an international contest before," said Gough. "But it was a great success and the feedback we have had from Olympic has been outstanding."

"They travel all over the place for fights but they said they had never been treated like this and looked after so well. That's nice to hear and huge credit to our club."

"It was an expensive show to put it on and it would not have been possible without our sponsors – Richardson Capital, Barclays Bank, Willows Construction and Virtual Guard – so a massive thank you to them. We put all their fighters, coaches and officials up at The Copthorne for two nights. We really went out of our way to look after them."

Training

"We picked them up from the airport and then took them to our gym for a training session, and then took them out for some food."

"On the first evening we had a Karting competition at Halesowen, which went down really well and then had some food and drinks after. The lads absolutely loved that. We even had three Priory lads coming first, second and third in that, which was great."

"The Olympic lads had some down-time the following day before the show and then they were driven back to the airport the day after. A lot of hard work went into organising the show but it was worth it. It was great experience for our lads, as we will be going over there to fight next year in the return match."

The standard of boxing also impressed Gough, who doubled up as match-maker with Olympic coach Mick

SPORTING FEATURE

By Nick Elwell

"I would love to do an England-Scotland-Ireland contest. That could be one for the future"

Mogan. "All the bouts were close and the quality was very high," said Gough. "Olympic are the No.1 club in Ireland and have won just about every competition going. One of their lads, Mike Delaney, is a four-time national champion and has won a bronze for GB."

"Their coach Mick Mogan trusted my judgement in matching up the fights and I trusted his. And it worked out because there were some great fights. As well as the international fights, a number of other contests made up a 15-bout bill with the youngest boxer aged 10 and the oldest 24, and we had around 300 people in."

Gough has designs on promoting further international shows in the future and may look north of the border.

"It has whet my appetite for more shows like this and I would love to do an England-Scotland-Ireland contest. That could be one for the future," he said.

As for the immediate future, the club are staging a development show at Brierley Hill Civic Hall on Saturday where there will be plenty of action featuring just Priory Park boxers.

And while the club's boxing contingent continues to grow, Gough also runs various fitness classes at the club's Priory Road base.

"The club is thriving at the moment. Our membership is rising and I am continually getting texts and calls from people asking if they can join," he said. "But it's not just about boxing. We also run various fitness classes at the gym and the parents also get involved. It's like one big happy family."

Tickets for the development show are available priced £15 and £10. Call Paul Gough on 07883 012981.

Deeney antics spark the wrath of Hughes

FORMER Walsall striker Troy Deeney has been told by Stoke City boss Mark Hughes he "should know better" after sparking a late melee in Watford's 1-0 home Premier League defeat.

In stoppage-time Stoke put the ball out of play after a player went down injured, but rather than pass the ball back the Hornets captain appeared to attempt a cross into the visitors' penalty area.

Joe Allen reacted angrily but found himself being grabbed by the face by the burly Hornets striker as players from both sides squared up. Deeney and Allen were booked, but Stoke boss Hughes was less than impressed by Deeney's conduct.

"I thought it was a bit unnecessary," he said. "Clearly we kicked the ball out and the right thing to do in the spirit of the game is throw it back."

"Deeney, the captain of the club, should know better but he shaped to play it into our box and that's why Joe reacted. I've seen pictures of raised hands and thumbnails in faces which is totally unnecessary."

Woakes the all-round fit to fill Stokes' void

ENGLAND all-rounder Chris Woakes has vowed to help fill the void left by Ben Stokes on the Ashes tour. Stokes has not flown out with the rest of the squad to Australia, having been suspended following an incident outside a Bristol nightclub in September.

The 26-year-old Durham player has not been ruled out of the five-match Test series which begins in Brisbane on November 23, but he is out of consideration for selection until further notice.

Captain Joe Root has suggested England are preparing to play the entire series without him, meaning Woakes and Moeen Ali, and wicketkeeper-batsman Jonny Bairstow, will have to replace those lost runs.

Great Barr-born Woakes said: "Losing Ben as an all-rounder means myself, Moeen and I suppose even Jonny have more of a chance to prove our worth. I take my batting as seriously as possible. I know I have been batting at nine in recent Test matches but whenever I have played for Warwickshire I have obviously batted a lot higher than that."

Event is all a-bout Olympic fighter

THE world's first-ever Punjabi MMA fighter is to visit the West Midlands next month for a charity event.

Olympian and UFC heavyweight Arjan Singh Bhullar will take part in a meet-and-greet event in Birmingham on November 25.

The Indo-Canadian fighter will also tell his life story at the event, which has been organised by the Wolverhampton-based Showfighter group.

Bhullar, aged 31, is currently ranked world number 19 in the MMA heavyweight division by the MMA World Ranking website.

The event is at The Hagley (Ibis Hotel) on Hagley Road, Birmingham. Funds raised will go to the Jet Singh Trust.

Bhullar has represented Canada internationally as a freestyle wrestler at several world championships, at the 2010 Commonwealth Games and at the 2012 Olympic Games. He is from Richmond, British Columbia.

In August 2014, Bhullar had his first amateur fight as a mixed martial artist. He turned pro in November of that year.



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Free entry to Glassboys for servicemen

ARMED forces personnel can watch Stourbridge FC for free this weekend.

The Glassboys' clash with Wotton Albion at the War Memorial Athletic Ground is the last home game before Remembrance Sunday and club officials are keen to show their support to Armed Forces personnel.

A spokesman said: "As a token of the club's gratitude for all those who have served to keep us and our country safe over the years, we are offering all current and former servicemen and women free entry to the match."

Servicemen or women should show ID confirming they have served in the forces or their Royal British Legion membership at the turnstiles.

A bucket collection and sales of 'Stourbridge Remembers' poppy pin badges, at £3 each, will go towards the Royal British Legion.

Meanwhile, Stourbridge boss Gary Hackett praised his side for emerging with a 1-0 FA Trophy win over unbeaten Basford United last Saturday.

The Glassboys were made to battle by a team who are top the division below with a 100 per cent away record. But the win puts Hackett's men into the second qualifying round of the FA Trophy and a tie at St Neots FC on November 11.

Aaron Forde settled the scrappy clash, guiding inside the far post from close range after 61 minutes following strong work down the right by Kennedy Digie and Luke Shearer.

Glassboys followed up on Tuesday with a 4-0 win over Sutton Coldfield Town.

First half goals from Luke Shearer and new boy Kyle Perry were followed by second half strikes from Aaron Forde and substitute Josh Cooke.

Opportunities at home and abroad

THERE were racing opportunities for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club both near and far at the weekend. Close to home a group travelled to Wolverhampton for the Coven Canter 10k, a race hosted by Wolverhampton & Bilston AC.

Tim Rowe placed 58th of 101 in 52.12, Lisa Perkins finished in 1.05.32 and Andrew Perkins stopped the clock in 1.09.38.

Another group travelled to Bridgnorth for a tough 10k starting in High Town before dropping down towards the river and inevitably climbing to a High Town finish. Gary Bonner came 13th in 41.55, John Andrews was 73rd in 50.26, Cilla Harding 185th in 1.01.02 and Jan Burbie was one second and one place behind.

In the Frankfurt Marathon, Dave Norman finished in 3.14.40, 1,783rd place, and Mark Homer 1,870th in 3.15.53, both dipping their toes in the international marathon water despite nursing themselves through the final few weeks of training trying to fend off injuries.

King's men on march up the table

BOSS Dave King says there is a feelgood factor around Tividale after they made it three straight wins by overcoming Dudley Sports in the West Midlands League.

A Dan Smith brace saw The Dale run out 2-1 winners at Hillcrest Avenue on Saturday – a result which moved them up to third in the Premier Division.

Now five points behind leaders Wolverhampton Sporting Community, King's men beat Bustleholme 3-2 on Tuesday night in the JW Hunt Cup

and resume their league campaign against AFC Bridgnorth on Saturday.

But despite their impressive recent form, the manager says nobody at the club is getting carried away.

"Things are going well, we are enjoying the season and there is a good buzz about the place," King said. "But we are well aware with have only played 13 games in a 38 game league season."

"I know it's a cliché, but when you take into account the cups as well, it's a long season and we

are going to take it one game at a time. Crowds are on the up, we are playing some good football – long may it continue."

"But we're in November so we won't be getting carried away just yet."

Elsewhere in the division, leaders Wolverhampton Sporting Community secured a 2-0 win over Dudley Town with Tom Hill netting both goals.

Black Country Rangers thrashed division whipping boys Wellington Amateurs 8-0. Smethwick fell to a 2-1 loss at Pegasus Juniors. Gornal Athletic secured a 4-1 win at Bustleholme.

RAVENS FLY OFF WITH THE WIN

Halesowen Town 2 Coalville Town 3
NEW signing Ethan Jones made an immediate impact with a goal for Halesowen, but they went down by the odd goal in five on Tuesday night.

The visitors took a 14th minute lead when a low shot from captain Steve Towers squeezed inside Dan Platt's post from 30 yards out. But the Yeltz were soon back on level terms in the 24th minute when defender Lee Torr was caught out by Jones, who then produced a great finish.

Dan Creaney regained Coalville's lead by slotting home from the penalty spot after Marcus Poscha upended Nathan Watson down the left of the area after 33 minutes.

Rebounded

Still the Yeltz came back and made it 2-2 in the 38th minute after another superb 20-yard strike from Jones rebounded down off the underside of the bar and Daniel Udoh was on hand to smash home the rebound.

The home side had their chances to grab a winner when John McAtee's low shot was collected by Hannis in the 54th minute and Kyle Morrison headed over the bar in front of goal after Danny Bragoli flicked on a 63rd minute free-kick.

But the Ravens struck a 78th minute winner when Watson burst down the left and finished superbly.

Grantham 1 Halesowen 0

HALESOWEN went out at the first hurdle in the FA Trophy in Lincolnshire on Saturday.

Grantham started the livelier from the first whistle and Dan Platt was called on to save from Michael Hollingsworth in the third minute.

It took until the 51st minute for the winning goal to come. Curtis Burrows saw a shot blocked but Jordan Hempenstall followed up to score.

Banks's hosts u-17 Euros games



Morgan Gibbs-White celebrates at the end of the World Cup Final with Angel Gomes

WALSALL'S Banks's Stadium will be a host ground for next year's UEFA European Under-17 Championship finals.

The annual tournament, for Europe's 16 elite nations, will be played from May 4-20. The Banks's will stage games along with Burton Albion, Chesterfield, Loughborough University, Rotherham United and St George's

Park. England, who won the World Cup last weekend with Wolves' Morgan Gibbs-White among the scorers, won the European title in 2010 and 2014, and were runners-up to Spain in 2017. They qualify automatically as hosts.

Walsall Chief Executive Stefan Gamble said: "We are delighted to be one of the host stadiums."

Derek not over Hill at age of 72

OLD Halesonians' young first XV faced another difficult trip on Saturday. They travelled to Scunthorpe with several changes again due to injuries.

The first half saw Hales give their all against a big home side. However, the second half was a bridge too far and the home team ran out victors 60-5. The first team are at home to Peterborough Lions on Saturday, kick off 2.15pm.

The Seconds welcomed Towcestrians 2nds to Wassell Grove with the visitors towards the top of the league and Old Hales forced into making 10 changes from the previous week's team. It was a challenge with Towcester starting well and running in several scores before Hales got into the game.

Eventually Old Hales gained some territory and Luke Fenton converted his own try. The visitors came back adding a couple of scores before a stray lineup allowed George Eccles to gather the ball and score in the corner. In between further Towcester scores, Steve Deakin scored a pushover try with Fenton again adding the extras.

For the second half Hales were unable to breach the Towcester defence and the final score was 19-74.

Following a flurry of morning activity, a representation of the Old Hales 4th XV travelled to Redditch to take on their well-prepared opponents, but went down 48-14. Tries came from Gareth Hughes and George Taylor. Great granddad 72-year-old Derek Hill played a full game in the front row.

King of the road after rally success

DUDLEY rally driver Clive King tasted success in the Historic Rally Car Club Championship. King, aged 59, and his Sutton Coldfield co-driver Anton Bird won their class in the national event.

They were quickest on every stage of the final round on forestry roads in Northumbria to clinch the 1300cc class in their Mini Sport-backed Cooper S.

King and Bird were runners-up in the championship involving more than 2,500 miles of travel during the season.

A retirement on the penultimate round on the Isle of Man denied them an overall victory when the Mini's back axle broke.

★★★

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